

The Spanish Civil War, Irish newspapers, journals, and periodicals – A
Thematic Examination, 1936-39

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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by examining Irish reportage of the Spanish Civil War thematically. The chosen themes have previously not been studied in a sustained scholarly manner: Guernica, Basque refugees, readers' letters, the siege of Madrid, Donegal and propaganda. This approach has reaped two particular rewards. First, it reveals a new level of detail about Irish reportage, particularly in the provincial publications. There are sources here utilised that have been largely overlooked. Second, it calls for a re-evaluation of the current understanding of Irish newspaper coverage as limited to two interpretations of the Spanish Civil War, namely as a necessary war against Fascism and/or as a war against Catholicism. As argued here, there was greater complexity than this. The thematic approach explores how the reporting of the conflict was viewed through the prism of Irish history of the past few centuries to the more contemporary. Most notably, the often problematic relationship with the United Kingdom supplied a myriad of cultural, historical and political references to frame the conflict in Spain for an Irish audience.

List of Abbreviations

ACA Army Comrades Association

CPI Communist Party of Ireland

EEC European Economic Community

IRA Irish Republican Army

KPJ Communist Party of Yugoslavia

MP Member of Parliament

NILP Northern Ireland Labour Party

NUR National Union of Railwaymen

OCR Optical character recognition

RAF Royal Air Force

RCP Portuguese Radio Club

UCC University College Cork

UCD University College Dublin

UK United Kingdom

US United States

Introduction

The Spanish Civil War which began on 17 July 1936 marked the start of a three-year conflict. Elements within the Spanish military had staged a coup to replace the second Spanish Republic. Spain had a history of coups and by the general election of February 1936 tensions were high. The war in Spain had a powerful impact on Ireland. The Spanish conflict highlighted that Irish society had not dealt with its own civil war fourteen years previously. In 1936, the Irish state was still at an embryonic stage, having only emerged from conflict with Britain after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. The Anglo-Irish Treaty 'facilitated the renewal of left and right organizations and the re-amplification of left-right political discourse.'¹

Ireland was commonly perceived to have an affinity with Spain due to a shared religion, a conservative society, and a history peppered with rebellion. The Spanish conflict brought about a battle of ideologies between the Republican Congress, the Communist Party of Ireland, socialists, and liberals, on the one side, and Fine Gael, the Christian Front, and the remnant of Eoin O'Duffy's Blueshirt movement, which would go on to compose the Irish Brigade, on the other. The press was also divided on ideological lines.

Rationale

The themes explored in this thesis all reference events from Ireland's past in the reporting of the Spanish Civil War. Colonialism, conquest, famine and proselytism were invoked by Irish publications throughout the Spanish Civil

¹ Mark O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', *Media, War & Conflict* 10, no. 3 (2017): 345-358. p. 346.

War in order to draw comparisons between events in Spain and Ireland. Partition, the War of Independence, the Irish Civil War, past British wars and Irish rebellions were also referenced. The themes analysed in each chapter have received little scholarly attention. Herein lies the rationale for researching a thematic analysis of nationalist, Unionist, radical and religious publications. The three Dublin daily newspapers, the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish Times*, and the *Irish Press*, feature heavily in this thesis. The *Independent*, a cheer-leader for Franco's insurgency and unapologetic champion of Catholic values, immediately backed the insurgency in Spain. The *Irish Times*, formerly a bastion of southern Unionism, has been described as one of the most objective newspapers that covered the Spanish Civil War.² The *Irish Press* was owned by Éamon de Valera and toed the government line on the conflict. The *Irish Press* backed non-intervention and ridiculed O'Duffy's Irish Brigade from the outset.

Nationalists in Northern Ireland were 'embittered' by the lack of concern for the Catholic Church shown by Protestants.³ The *Derry Journal* and the *Londonderry Sentinel* published accounts of the conflict and editorials at odds with each other. The *Journal* was akin to the *Independent* in its strident Catholicism and republished articles from the *Cross*.⁴ The *Sentinel* backed the British government's policy of non-intervention and compared the propaganda in the Free State for the insurgency in Spain to the nationalist hostility Ulster Loyalists had faced in the past from the Dublin press during the Irish Civil War

² Bowyer, Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *Studia Hibernica* No.9 (1969): 137-63. p. 140.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴ *Derry Journal*, 11 June 1937.

and the War of Independence.⁵ The same relationship was present in Belfast between the *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Irish News*. The *Belfast Telegraph* backed Britain and the *Irish News* hailed Franco's insurgency. The provincial press reporting, which relied solely on readers' accounts and agency reports on the conflict, reveals that rural Ireland was aware of the issues in Spain. The reportage shows a pattern that consistently sought to draw a link between the events in Spain and Ireland's troubled history with Britain. The events in Guernica were not reported until three weeks after they occurred. When the Basque children were to be evacuated from Spain to the UK, the Donegal newspapers cited the experiences of Boer families during the Boer War as evidence as to why Britain should not be trusted with children. The editorials, especially in Donegal, were obsessed with Britain's role in the conflict and the partition of Ireland.

Literature Review

Ireland – press, politics and Spain

In terms of the research that has been carried out on the historiography of Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, there are two essential texts and one paper: McGarry's *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* and his subsequent paper 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish War' and Robert Stradling's *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*. Both books were published in 1999 and were the first scholarly texts on a subject neglected for nearly sixty years. They emerged from a growing awareness of the Spanish Civil War, inspired by commemorations of the International Brigades which began in the 1980s.

⁵ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 1 September 1936.

McGarry's book examines both the press coverage of the conflict and the politics surrounding it. Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez of Complutense University in Madrid suggests McGarry's contribution reconstructs the civil war 'as the Irish people saw it'. Atrocities were reported in Irish publications but some newspapers 'inflated or invented' Francoists crimes.⁶ McGarry argued that far from being insular, Ireland's response to the Spanish conflict was more outward-looking than current literature allows. The book has three sections: volunteers, interest groups and politics. The research contextualises the period forensically for the reader and incorporates all the relevant diocesan archives to build a picture of the Irish response to the conflict. The sources for the book are extensive and take advantage of archives in both Spain and Ireland. McGarry examines how Ireland's culture and politics helped to add to the 'often badly informed' domestic reactions and reveals much about 'the political culture of interwar Ireland'.⁷ He argues that it must not be forgotten that Ireland was predominantly pro-Franco in its response to the Spanish Civil War unlike most European states. McGarry argues that the UK's outlook on the conflict, the opposite to that of Ireland, with the majority of the public not in favour of recognising Franco. The Irish response was broadly like that of other European nations and 'was centred on anti-communism and Catholicism'.⁸ Ireland's contribution to the Spanish conflict in terms of volunteers was not insignificant and produced half as many as Britain did in the period and demonstrates the significance that the conflict had for Ireland. McGarry

⁶ Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez, 'Review of Books', *The International History Review* 22, No. 3, (2000). pp. 694-695.

⁷ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), vii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

concludes that Ireland was not 'isolated from European currents' but that 'European ideas merged with Irish circumstances'.⁹ This thesis will demonstrate that the infighting between anti-fascists that was witnessed in Dublin between Catholic activists and republicans, and in Donegal, was mirrored on a larger scale in Germany, by fascists and communists. The Catholic Church understood the importance of the formulation of public opinion in Ireland. It was aware of the threat posed by the *Irish Times* and British news sources. The manipulation and control of news in Ireland 'was the most important pillar of clerical authority in Ireland'.¹⁰

McGarry's article from 2002 was the first to address, in great detail, Irish reportage of the Spanish conflict since Bell's article in 1969. The press in Ireland 'played a crucial role in moulding public opinion on Spain, a role which, for the most part, reflected social, religious and political division within the Irish Free State as much as the issues at stake in Spain'.¹¹ He reminds us that the battle between the *Independent* and the *Irish Times* was over Catholicism 'as a defining factor of identity' and over the legacy of the Anglo-Irish treaty. It was the ideological battle in Irish newspapers between supporting the insurgency or supporting the Madrid government that dictated the editorial line of Spain rather 'than any real difference of opinion on the issues involved in Spain'.¹² McGarry explores how Irish reportage influenced public opinion and how the Catholic Church was acutely aware of the power of the press. Indeed, the Catholic press 'closely scrutinised' non-clerical publications, and the *Cross*

⁹ Ibid., p. 234.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 237.

¹¹ Fearghal McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies* 33, no. 129 (2002): 68–90, p. 68.

¹² Ibid., p. 90.

concluded that only the *Independent* has 'given the Spanish crisis the important place which it merits'.¹³ McGarry reminds us that the Catholic hierarchy had long been wary of secular and British-orientated publications and had warned of the dangers from the inception of the state. Furthermore, Cardinal MacRory suggested there was a conspiracy within the British press and 'I regret to say, in some of our own in Ireland' to collude with the Church of England.¹⁴

The paper examines the attack on Guernica and analyses the reportage of the main daily newspapers, the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Press*. McGarry details the inaccurate reporting surrounding the attack and how each daily paper misreported what happened, noting that the *Independent*, unlike the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Press*, accepted Franco's denials over the attack. My chapter analyses the reportage of Guernica in further detail and expands the sources significantly by examining the *Donegal News*, the *Donegal Vindicator* and the *Donegal Democrat*. I also examine the *Irish News*, *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Derry Journal* which all printed distortions or mistruths of the attack throughout the conflict.

Stradling had an alternative perspective on the Spanish Civil War and Ireland to McGarry. Stradling concentrated his research on the Irish volunteers for both sides in Spain. The initial focus of the book draws attention to public perception of the Irishmen involved. Stradling juxtaposes the legacy of Frank Ryan and Eoin O'Duffy with Ryan as an 'image of Irish heroism' whereas O'Duffy fought for the 'wrong side' in Spain. The first page draws on coverage

¹³ Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

from the *Independent* in August 1936 to help the reader appreciate the ferocity of the coverage devoted to clerical massacres in Spain and the call, on the same page, for an Irish Brigade for Spain. The daily press 'had created a market of interest in Spanish barbarities'.¹⁵ Furthermore, 'after six months Ireland remained obsessed with the war in Spain' and 'was the subject of constant discussion on race-courses and golf-courses, in clubs and pubs. The newspapers constantly 'stimulated this appetite' for news from Spain.¹⁶ Stradling does not dwell on the press coverage but uses it to set the scene of a public eager to hear the latest news. Scholars have questioned his knowledge of inter-war politics in Ireland but this does not detract from the level of detail the book contains on the participants and conditions in Spain.¹⁷ He concludes that the Spanish Civil War should be viewed through examination of the facts rather than as propaganda for either the pro-Franco lobby or pro-Spanish government position. The events should be examined by 'scholars, rather than as propagandists and memorialists of the republican cause'.¹⁸ Stradling's work alongside McGarry's thesis provides the researcher with two foundation texts that analyse Ireland's response to the Spanish Civil War.

The first article to examine Irish newspapers during the Spanish Civil War was authored by Bowyer Bell. His 1969 paper 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939' analysed a conflict that 'acted as a scalpel laying bare the Irish body politic'. Ireland followed a policy that in many ways was a

¹⁵ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). p. 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁷ Brian Hanley, 'Review' *History Ireland*, 4, vol.7, 1999 p. 53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

'harbinger of Irish foreign policy for the future: disinterested neutrality' and the conflict allowed Ireland to learn a lot about geopolitics and the role a small nation can play for little cost.¹⁹ A strength is its examination of regional Northern Ireland publications. Bell's article examines publications that O'Brien, McGarry and Stradling did not, including the *Derry Journal*, *Northern Herald*, *Fermanagh Times*, *Kerryman*, *Kilkenny People* and *Easter Week*. This thesis builds on his work by utilising the archives of the *Derry Journal*, *Londonderry Sentinel*, *Donegal News*, *Donegal Democrat* and *Donegal Vindicator*. Bell argued that uncovering Irish public opinion in the 1930s is fraught with difficulty and suggested that editorials are 'crude' and can include personal prejudices but that one should utilise retrospective opinions, newspaper editorials and 'various hints and guesses.'²⁰ McGarry's book notes the response of the Ulster newspapers, but Bell offers us a glimpse of the *Derry Journal* and the *Irish News*, two newspapers that rarely feature in the literature.

Scholarship on the main Irish daily newspapers and journals is documented in various press histories by O'Brien and Rafter, Brown, Shovlin, and Devine.²¹ Each chapter profiles the editors and examines the reporting of the Spanish Civil War. The literature does not examine the subtle nuances of language or themes present in the coverage. Devine's chapter gives us an overview of the left-wing writers from Ireland in the 1930s and adds that it was 'unsurprising' that the largely Catholic population associated with Franco's

¹⁹ Bowyer-Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', pp. 162-163.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 139.

²¹ Kathleen Devine, ed., *Modern Irish Writers and the Wars* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1999). Terence Brown, *The Irish Times 150 Years of Influence* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015). Mark O'Brien, *The Irish Times A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008). Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter, eds., *Independent Newspapers: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012). Frank Shovlin, *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923-1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

insurgency, suggesting the state had 'a conservative instinct, ironically, supporting rebellion.' An important aspect to her work was the inclusion in the introduction of the situation in the Northern Ireland. Devine argued that 'Ulster memory of recent Irish history was also raw and the political coloration of the forces associated with the Spanish Republican government would obviously have been a matter for suspicion'.²² My thesis draws on themes which have not been researched, with an emphasis on Ulster, readers' letters, the attack on Guernica and the Basque children who were sent to the UK. Devine's book, with Peadar O'Donnell's writings and the poetry of Charles Donnelly, helps to contextualise the period, in which left-leaning Irish writers were marginalised.

Shovlin's chapter focuses solely on *Ireland To-Day*. Edited by James O'Donovan, *Ireland To-Day* featured several leading Republican columnists including Frank O'Connor, Seán O'Faoláin and Owen Sheehy Skeffington.²³ *Ireland To-Day* was described as 'the most subversive publication...on the Irish market'.²⁴ Shovlin analyses *Ireland To-Day*'s contribution to Irish public life because the journal saw itself as 'having a crucial role to play in providing the Irish public with an alternative view of the Spanish conflict to that supplied by mainstream broadsheets and, most especially, by the conservative *Irish Independent*.' Shovlin focuses on the contributions to the journal by Owen Sheehy Skeffington and Peadar O'Donnell who both supported the Spanish Republic. The dismissal of Sheehy Skeffington by O'Donovan for anti-religious writings was, according to O'Donnell, like 'giving Bishop Skeffington's head on

²² Devine, *Modern Irish Writers and the Wars*, p. 147.

²³ Ibid., p.147.

²⁴ *Irish Monthly*, September 1936, p. 694, quoted in McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 85.

a plate' and amounted to a capitulation to the Church.²⁵ The journal's demise was symptomatic of the Church's power in stifling free speech. Indeed, it has been noted that the period in which *Ireland To-day* was published coincided with the first month of the Spanish Civil War. Articles argued against non-intervention and suggesting Franco's victory was a 'near certainty'. The rationale of *Ireland To-day*, according to Ballin, was to show the Irish people that the state needed to 'embrace European connections and to avoid a sterile and limited inward-looking focus'.²⁶

O'Brien and Rafter's *Independent Newspapers – A History* goes some way to explain the rationale and politics of the *Independent's* position during the conflict; one that was informed by the 'fate of the Catholic church' and was dependent, in the early stages of the conflict, on 'press agencies and unverified second-hand accounts of events.' The Spanish Civil War marked the 'highpoint of Catholic conservatism' and the safety of a 'commercial environment that an insular society provided'. Under the stewardship of Frank Geary, the paper played its 'Catholic card' and demanded action from the Irish government to intervene in the early stages of the conflict.²⁷ The chapter is insightful and illuminates the reportage and editorial policy during the conflict of a paper that will be extensively referenced in this thesis.

Since the early 2000s, texts on the Irish media and the Spanish Civil War have been relatively scarce. However, O'Brien's 'In war-torn Spain': The politics of Irish press coverage of the Spanish Civil War', is an exception. The

²⁵ Shovlin, *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923-1958*, p. 86.

²⁶ Malcolm Ballin, 'Contacting Europe through "Ireland To-day": 1936-1938', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2, (2004), p. 292.

²⁷ Mark O'Brien and Kevin Rafter, eds., *Independent Newspapers: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), p. 91-93.

title, taken from the name of Gertrude Gaffney's columns for the *Independent*, builds upon the work of McGarry's paper with additional facts on the individual reporters of the time such as Chris O'Sullivan. O'Sullivan was the managing editor of the *Irish Press* throughout the conflict but was sacked because he was discovered to be reporting undercover on the Irish Brigade. In later years, he argued that his departure was in part due to being non 'conformist, not a Catholic, wasn't seen going to church'. O'Brien draws strands of research from his previous publications for the article as well as including new original data. Like other works about the press in this period, it is very much an overview of the period. O'Brien utilised archival sources in Australia and exposed the *Irish Press*' undercover episode with the Irish Brigade. Furthermore, O'Brien adds new details and analysis of the reporters who were sent to Spain, including Gertrude Gaffney's thirteen-part dispatch which often compared the landscape in Spain to Ireland with 'fields as green as any in Ireland' and stressed 'the commonalities between Spain and Ireland'.²⁸ O'Brien's research is a welcome contribution to the historiography and demonstrates that there is more research to be carried out regarding Irish reportage on the Spanish Civil War.

O'Brien's latest work *The Fourth Estate* recreates the context in which the Spanish Civil War coverage was set. The sixth chapter 'Official Ireland' examined the opinion of the *Irish Catholic* and the *Standard* on Franco's insurgency. O'Brien does not labour points made in previous publications about Gertrude Gaffney, the *Independent's* foreign correspondent in Spain,

²⁸ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 352.

and Lionel Fleming, the *Irish Times* reporter sent to Spain during the conflict.²⁹ This is one of its strengths, and makes *The Fourth Estate* a useful tool with which to navigate the Catholic dominated era of Irish newspaper publishing as a whole, not focusing solely on the Spanish Civil War. O'Brien's book is important as it contextualises the coverage of the Spanish Civil War with other national and societal issues dominant in Ireland during the period in question. The *Irish Times*, Brown argued, tried in vain to protect the 'integrity of the press in wartime' in Ireland, where the Spanish conflict was widely assumed to be an attack on a Catholic country by communism. The paper faced a serious threat, due to its lower price and popularity, from the *Independent*, which was 'determined to win Irish hearts and minds for Franco's cause'. Nevertheless, it sought objectively to report the conflict in order to counter the threat by the *Independent*. For the *Irish Times*, the conflict was political and not religious but it was 'rooted in the complex history and social conditions of Spanish life.'³⁰ Brown's thesis provides a detailed examination of the reportage across the coverage of the war and correctly differentiates the *Irish Times*' coverage of the attack on Guernica with its rivals. The *Irish Times* had the foresight to link the attack on Guernica with the aerial bombardment in parts of China by the Japanese and suggested it pointed to a new paradigm in international conflict where the civilians could be as much of a target as the military. Indeed, this was confirmed in March 1939 when a *Times* editorial suggested, regarding the Sudetenland crisis, 'Goering's bombing aeroplanes would have been over

²⁹ Mark O'Brien, *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 92-94.

³⁰ Terence Brown, *The Irish Times 150 Years of Influence*, p. 160.

Prague in a few hours, and one of the loveliest cities in the world would have shared the fate of Guernica.’³¹

John Horgan’s analysis of the Spanish Civil War in *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* does not contain any reference to the work of McGarry and Stradling. Nonetheless, he devotes two pages to the conflict from an all-island perspective which is useful, particularly in describing the difference between the *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press*, both of whom were appealing to ‘a largely conservative and Catholic readership’. One line from Horgan’s two pages, which is absent from other work on the Irish media during this period, talks of local newspapers following the *Independent’s* line on Spain, as was the case with the *Derry Journal*. Horgan describes the *Belfast Telegraph’s* position as one of support for the British government’s position of neutrality while having a ‘sideswipe at the Catholic Church’. The same could be said for the *Londonderry Sentinel*. The *Irish News* supported neutrality to a certain degree but with an ‘understandably different perspective’ from the *Belfast Telegraph* noting that Ireland needed to focus on its own problems first. The *Irish Press*, backed financially by de Valera, took a different stance and often reminded its readership that the Vatican, like Ireland, still maintained diplomatic relations with the Madrid government despite the clamour by the *Independent* for a severing of relations.³² Horgan’s book was one of the few studies of the period and suggested that ‘local

³¹ *Irish Times*, 21 March 1939, Quoted in Ibid.

³² John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 38-39.

newspapers tended to follow the *Independent's* line' on Spain. It reinforces the need for a reappraisal of Irish newspapers.³³

Mark McNally's paper, 'Fianna Fáil and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939: The rhetoric of hegemony and equilibrium' argued that Fianna Fáil cannot be reduced to a 'pro-Franco stance' or 'absolute neutrality' during the conflict. For McNally, Fianna Fáil's role lies in its ideology and its determination to 'maintain its hegemony over three particular identities in Irish society'. The 'identities' encompassed Republicans and workers who may have had sympathy for the Spanish government, Catholics within the party, and members of the public who were neutral to the conflict.³⁴ In Ireland, de Valera's willingness to engage with the Covenant of the League of Nations over Abyssinia 'led to the establishment of Irish neutrality' which would become the bedrock of Irish foreign policy in the years ahead.³⁵ McNally's work gives the background to the governing party of state, the leader of which owned the *Irish Press* and from Dáil debates and *Irish Press* columns, McNally argued that the debates around the Spanish Civil War in Ireland were 'more complex' than simply stating that most Irish politicians and newspapers supported Franco.³⁶

Ireland's literary response to the Spanish conflict was examined by Ute Anna Mittermaier in her paper 'Irish Literary Responses to the Spanish Civil War – With Particular Reference to Peadar O'Donnell's *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (1937).' The focus was on the propaganda produced during the conflict.

³³ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁴ Mark McNally, 'Fianna Fáil and the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939: The Rhetoric of Hegemony and Equilibrium', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 14, no. 1 (2009): 69–91, pp. 70–71.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

The piece argued that Irish society's conservatism meant that most 'aesthetic literary treatments of the Spanish Civil War came from Irish writers living in exile in Britain.' Her analysis of *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* contextualises the media and literary landscape at that time. She argued that Ireland 'was swept by a wave of anti-Communist hysteria and public opinion was overwhelmingly pro-Franco' and stated that O'Donnell's book exemplified post-independence commentators who consistently sought to portray the conflict in Spain through a prism of 'contemporary socio-political tensions.'³⁷ Her treatment of O'Donnell is thorough and successfully maps his involvement in Irish politics to *Salud!*, the book he eventually wrote about the Spanish Civil War, and his campaign on behalf of the Spanish Republic. A key theme for this thesis is to be found in a brief footnote on O'Donnell's speeches and prolific letter-writing in August 1936 which offered 'simplistic and one-sided explanations for the turmoil in Spain.'³⁸ She concludes by summarising '*Salud!*' and suggests the text was written to settle scores with conservative adversaries and to 'exonerate' himself from the charge that he was a 'Bolshevist agitator.'³⁹ O'Donnell, as my thesis bears out, was seen as a communist agitator in Ireland throughout the Spanish Civil War, apart from one occasion when he came across as 'mild' in his convictions.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ute Anna Mittermaier, 'Irish Literary Responses to the Spanish Civil War—With Particular Reference to Peadar O'Donnell's *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (1937)', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 89, no. 7–8 (2012), pp. 123–128.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁰ *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 12 November 1936.

United Kingdom and Spain

Ireland's nearest neighbour, the UK, offered a more varied journalistic response to the conflict. In *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War*, Deacon offers a historical case study of the British coverage. The work is structured thematically and examines journalists' eyewitness accounts. The book focuses on female journalists, governmental and commercial influences and propaganda. Deacon argued that 'media responses cannot be divorced from the wider social and political context'. Drawing on Guernica as an example, Deacon argued that the bombing of the Basque town could be described as 'a tipping point in British attitudes towards the Nationalists'. Irish reportage questioned the attack for weeks after the event. Deacon's thesis is a useful tool with which to compare Ireland's coverage to Britain's, as the two countries reported the conflict differently.⁴¹

L. B. Shelmerdine's 'Britons In An 'unBritish' War: Domestic Newspapers and the Participation of UK nationals in the Spanish Civil War' and David Deacon's *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late*.⁴² (is this a sentence?) Shelmerdine's paper suggests that the British newspapers' response to the conflict was polemical. The government was not interested in a conflict where 'Bolshevism and Fascism represented the extremes of political dogma.' It was that stance, argued Shelmerdine, that the British government hid behind out of fear of a wider European conflict. The reportage was split between publications. The *Daily*

⁴¹ David Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 172.

⁴² Deacon David, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) L. B Shelmerdine, 'Briton's In An "unBritish" War: Domestic Newspapers and the Participation of UK Nationals in the Spanish Civil War', *North West Labour History*, no. 22 (n.d.): pp. 20–47.

Mail, *Observer*, *Morning Post* and *Daily Sketch* supported Franco, employing the term 'Nationalist' instead of 'anti-Red'. The *News Chronicle*, *Daily Herald* and *Daily Worker* supported the Republican government. The larger British titles, the *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* toyed with the idea of appeasement and non-intervention. The only publications that attempted impartiality on the Spanish question, and did so with some success, were *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* who employed the terms 'Loyalist, Government forces and Republic' for one side and 'insurgent and later Nationalist for the other'.⁴³ For other papers such as the *Daily Mail*, Britain's biggest selling newspaper, the issue was clear. The conflict was against Bolshevism. Clearly it was the British counterpart of the *Irish Independent*. Sheldermine suggests it is the reporting or non-reporting of the British citizens fighting in Spain for the International Brigades that determines the press coverage. The *Daily Mail* and the *Observer* lauded the Italian contribution to Franco but ignored the arrival of British volunteers in Madrid, whereas the other papers noted their return albeit without any enthusiasm.⁴⁴

Volunteers for the International Brigades – case studies

The first book to explore on the exploits of the Irishmen in the International Brigade was Michael O'Riordan's *Connolly Column: The Story of the Irishmen who fought for the Spanish Republic 1936-1939*. Originally published in 1979, and republished in 2005 with new details from O'Riordan's son, Manus, the book was the first attempt to document Ireland's relationship with the Spanish

⁴³ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.40.

conflict. O’Riordan, the long-time secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) and veteran of the Connolly Column peppered the text with excellent details on battles and logistics. The book cites historical parallels with Spain and the Irish Civil War. There is frequent mention of Franco’s use of the Moors. The book has not been subject to extensive scholarly scrutiny since its publication. David Convery’s paper ‘Cork volunteers and the Spanish Civil War’ presents an overall picture of the men who enlisted from Cork for the International Brigades and the Irish Brigade. Convery argues that the *Cork Examiner* changed its language to report the conflict in Spain from ‘Republicans’ to ‘Reds’, and gave more emphasis to the Nationalist uprising throughout the conflict.⁴⁵ Convery’s paper adds to the growing body of work about Irish volunteers in the International Brigades. There are also studies on the response to war in Waterford, Limerick, Belfast and the north west of Ireland. McLoughlin’s *Fighting for Republican Spain 1936-38* examines the role of Frank Ryan, and the five other Limerick men in the International Brigades. The book details their service records and gives an account of their motivations for taking part in the war, as well as re-examining Ryan’s involvement in Germany after the war in Spain. It also contains fascinating detail on Ryan’s physical condition, accommodation and personal writings during this period. Additionally, the book adds useful insight and the Christian Front rallies and speeches in Limerick. Indeed, Fr Stenson, a former Vice-Rector of the Irish College in Salamanca was drafted in to the city to keep ‘the hysteria and misinformation about contemporary events in Iberia on the boil’.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ David Convery, ‘Cork and the Spanish Civil War’, *Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 1 (2006): 83–98. p. 86.

⁴⁶ Barry McLoughlin, *Fighting For Republican Spain: 1936-39* (Lulu, 2014), pp. 24-25.

The south east of the country is examined by Emmet O'Connor in his paper 'Behind the legend: Waterfordmen in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War'. The paper examines the eleven men, none of whom left directly from Waterford, who volunteered for the International Brigade. The exhaustive detail in the paper draws on primary sources, researched in Moscow, to build a picture of the type of Irishmen who fought in Spain. O'Connor does not reference any newspaper coverage from the city but instead focuses on the men's stories and politics. A fundamental conditioning for the mostly ex-Irish Republican Army men (IRA) was the 'militarised atmosphere of 1916 to 1923' and, although motivated by anti-Fascism, the men largely 'interpreted the Spanish conflict through the prism of Irish politics'.⁴⁷

O'Connor's research also featured in a series of articles entitled 'Derry, the north west, and the Spanish Civil War' that were published in the *Sunday Journal*. Serialised over six editions, the articles paint a picture of the men from Donegal, Tyrone and Derry who enlisted in Spain to defend the Republic. Like the situation in Limerick and Waterford, most of the volunteers were emigrants before they travelled to Spain. The paper states that twenty-three men from Derry fought in Spain. The articles add context to the overall national picture of volunteers and remind us that before Ireland joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 the country was an inward-looking state.⁴⁸ It is this inward-looking state that is examined and exposed through this thesis.

⁴⁷ Emmet O'Connor "Behind the legend": Waterfordmen in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War', *Decies: Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol 61(2005), pp. 267-85, p. 275.

⁴⁸ Emmet O'Connor, 'Derry, the north west, and the Spanish Civil War, parts 1-6', *Sunday Journal* (Derry), 2 April - 7 May 2006.

Newspapers that have not been previously researched for their Spanish Civil War content sheds a new light on the state in this period. John Quinn's *Irish Volunteers for Spain. A Short History of the Northern Irish Volunteers who fought in the Defence of the Republican government of Spain 1936-1939* contains biographical details of men from Northern Ireland and includes featured biographies of six volunteers. The cross-community research underpins the idea that all the men from across Northern Ireland were inspired by anti-Fascism, despite different cultural backgrounds.⁴⁹ The chapter on Donegal in this thesis adds to this small study of rural Ireland and helps to build a bigger picture of the context in which Ireland's newspaper reportage was set.

Foreign correspondents

Paul Preston's *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* is an account of the Spanish Civil War from the perspectives of the journalists that covered it. The work is immeasurably important. Preston shows the war from the journalists' points of view, their struggles, close shaves and how difficult it was to view the conflict objectively. It is the only work that concentrates on the reporters and is the most exhaustive account of the conflict from the journalistic view point to date. The book was inspired by Preston's idea that many of the journalists who covered the war in Spain were irrevocably changed by their experiences. The contains an excellent detailed

⁴⁹ John Quinn, *Irish Volunteers for Spain. A Short History of the Northern Irish Volunteers who fought in the Defence of the Republican government of Spain 1936-1939* (Belfast, Bryson Publications, 2006).

account of the experience of journalists in the rebel zone, and a comparison made with the experiences of those in the areas controlled by the Spanish Republic.

According to Sir Percival Phillips, correspondent of the British *Daily Telegraph*, Franco's press secretary Luis Bolín 'made himself hated like poison by the English and American correspondents'. Any correspondent who argued with him or incurred his disapproval might not be issued a visa, for example. No such venom was expressed by fascist journalists from Italy, Germany and Portugal who received preferential treatment from the insurgent authorities. Preston's work on the press, from a mainly Anglo-American viewpoint, remains the most authoritative account of journalists' lives in Spain during and after the conflict and have been utilised in the Madrid and Guernica chapters to expand on conditions on the ground for news agency reporters whose cables were available to Irish newspapers.

International Studies

The press reportage in Ireland during the Spanish Civil War has thus far received little scholarly examination, despite the plethora of sources on the Spanish Civil War. The same can be said for the international reportage on the conflict. There are some notable exceptions with texts examining the *New York Times* as well as Palestinian, French and Croatian reportage. Raanan Rein's essay, 'Echoes of the Spanish Civil War in Palestine: Zionists, Communists and the Contemporary Press', examines the Jewish community in Palestine and the contrast with the Republican cause. Like most communities at the time there were those who supported Franco's insurgency

to rid Spain of the 'communist menace' and those who sided with the Anglo-French policy of non-intervention and as a result were neutral on the conflict. He argues that the Zionist Left in Israel tried to understate its followers' contributions to the Spanish Republic, and that the Palestinian Communist Party unequivocally supported the Republic.⁵⁰ Like the *Irish Times*, which advocated the need to allow a democratically elected government to govern, the liberal daily *Ha'aretz* consistently supported the Republican cause and lambasted France and Britain for their neutrality, a stance which ultimately only served the interests of Nationalist leaders. *Ha'aretz* was privately owned and was not dependent on any political party, much like the *Irish Times*. Rein argued that the left-wing Jewish press employed propaganda that cast the Arabs as the Francoist rebels, while the 'Jews in Palestine were depicted as the republican freedom fighters', and the British were criticised for non-intervention in both Spain and Palestine. As in Ireland, both British foreign policy and domestic politics were criticised.

The Spanish Civil War had an impact on politics across Europe, not least in Croatia whose considerable Catholic population was influenced by 'clergymen issuing dire warnings about the red menace reaching from Madrid to Moscow'. Vjeran Pavlaković's paper, 'The Croatian Media and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', examines the Croatian media from newspaper propaganda to political speeches. He also researches radicalism in universities and concentrates on radical and communist publications. His research on readers' letters to Croatian newspapers is one of the few scholarly

⁵⁰ Raanan Rein, 'Echoes of the Spanish Civil War in Palestine: Zionists, Communists and the Contemporary Press', *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 1 (2008): 9–23, p. 9-10.

assessments of readers' letters and the Spanish conflict. Croatia, like Ireland was rural and predominantly Catholic. The rural communities in Croatia, the 'peasantry', wrote letters to local publications that referred to debates and meetings between neighbours on the situation in Spain. Unlike its Irish counterpart, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) was illegal. Their publication *Proleter*, was like the Irish *Worker*, in that it drew comparisons between the situation in Yugoslavia and the Spanish Civil War:

The fate of Spain today is the fate of Yugoslavia tomorrow. Yugoslavia should be interested in the victory of the Spanish people since those same attackers want to destroy the supporters of freedom and democracy in Yugoslavia.⁵¹

Irish newspapers also received and published letters warning that the future of Ireland rested on the outcome of the Spanish conflict. Transcripts were published in the newspapers of *Radio Madrid* transmissions by Croat members of the International Brigades who called for 'all oppressed minorities and nationalities' to join the fight for the Republic. Frank Ryan also issued at least two broadcasts for the same station in Madrid on behalf of the Republic, a powerful propaganda tool.⁵² The *Proleter* argued: 'today's fight for Madrid will also defend...our white Zagreb.' Many of the legal publications in Croatia either 'tacitly or implicitly' supported the nationalists and religious publications portrayed a negative image of the government in Spain.

Isolationist in its approach to world affairs during the 1930s, the United States (US) was a key signatory with France and Britain of the Non-Intervention Treaty, and the US media and its large Catholic population took a

⁵¹ Pavlaković Vjeran, 'From Popular Front to Political Radicalization: The Croatian Media and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939', *Slovo* 21, no. 1 (2009): 29–43. p. 12.

⁵² Barry McLoughlin, *Fighting For Republican Spain: 1936-39* (Lulu, 2014), p. 127; see also: Séan Cronin, *Frank Ryan The Search for The Republic* (Dublin: Repsol Publishing, 1980), p. 126.

keen interest in the Spanish Civil War. The *New York Times* was one of the most widely-read papers in the US and Julie Prieto's paper, 'Partisanship in Balance: The *New York Times* Coverage of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939' examines its reportage. The *New York Times* dispatched three permanent reporters to Spain: Herbert L. Matthews in Madrid, Lawrence A. Fernsworth in Barcelona, and William P. Carney who was based in Nationalist territory. This number exceeded its rivals, making the paper one of the most cited sources on the war in the US.⁵³ Unlike most Irish newspapers, the *New York Times* published a range of opinions and partisan articles from its correspondents to create a semblance of balance. As Prieto argues, the balance did not exist in reality. The paper manipulated news coming out of Spain, with its staff changing and cutting articles by Matthews and Fernsworth, 'while Carney's articles were given prominence despite his known attempts to fabricate and misrepresent his stories.'⁵⁴

Prieto suggests that, although the reporters' articles were highly partisan, it was the copy-editors, proof readers and editorial staff that 'filtered' the news, making decisions before the copy reached the editor. Editorial staff in New York had a high degree of autonomy in making changes to articles. Carney's articles minimised Nationalist atrocities and played down the significance of Italian and German troops in Spain. However, his fame grew, and his work was soon being cited across the country in conservative and Catholic publications. Carney was not alone in his work being changed to

⁵³ Julie Prieto, 'Partisanship in Balance: *The New York Times* Coverage of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939' Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, (2007): pp. 1-43. p. 1. <http://www.alba-valb.org/resources/document-library/partisanship-in-balance-the-new-york-times-coverage-of-the-spanish-civil-war-1936-1939> (Accessed 20/10/2015)

⁵⁴ Ibid.

reflect certain biases and republished elsewhere. In December 1936 Matthews' pro-republican reporting from Madrid underplayed the role of Soviet aid during the battle for Madrid to such an extent that the Bureau of Information of the Spanish Embassy in Washington DC quoted from it in their press releases.⁵⁵ The *New York Times*, according to Prieto, failed to deliver objective and neutral news to its readers. Its attempt to provide balance by publishing contrasting perspectives from its three reporters still continued to result in complaints, particularly from Catholic readers. The reporters were not entirely to blame. The structure of the paper and its presentation were the responsibility of the editorial staff. Prieto's article examines the editorial staff, their composition, and the ideology and influence of the editors. This sort of analysis is sorely lacking in Irish sources. Little is known of the day-to-day atmosphere or editorial tensions in the Dublin papers.

The coverage of the Nazi press is the focus of Beth Griech-Polelle's chapter, 'Jesuits, Jews and Communists: Portrayals of Jesuits and other Catholic Religious in Nazi Newspapers during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39'. In the Nazi press, Franco was waging a war against a 'Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy' that threatened the whole of Europe. The press' tactics were two-fold, according to Griech-Polelle. Firstly, *Der Sturmer* and *Das Schwarze Korps* 'used the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War to undermine the power and authority of the episcopacy of the Catholic church'.⁵⁶ Secondly, the

⁵⁵ Bureau of Information, Spanish Embassy, Washington D.C. "Nazi Intervention in Spain", "Incontrovertible Facts Regarding the Destruction of Guernica." Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, Quoted in: Ibid.

⁵⁶ Beth Griech-Polelle, 'Jesuits, Jews, and Communists: Portrayals of Jesuits and Other Catholic Religious in Nazi Newspapers during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39', in James Bernauer and Robert A. Maryks, eds, *The Tragic Couple: Encounters Between Jews and Jesuits* (Leiden Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013), 161-77, p. 161.

propaganda helped to foment hostility in Germany against the Jews; it was argued that a decisive victory was essential to stop the 'Jewish Bolshevik gang' from threatening Europe. Indeed, government interference was so strong that Joseph Goebbels forbade German newspapers from using the term 'rebels' for Franco soldiers or describing the conflict as an insurgency or coup.⁵⁷ The article provides a stark contrast to the reporting by Irish newspapers. In Germany, the press was consistently anti-Catholic, despite Nazi government support for Franco's insurgency. Griech-Polelle argued that the press coverage reflected Nazi preoccupations with Judaism and Catholicism. The newspapers published cruel anti-Jewish cartoons to reinforce the idea that Jews were behind the Spanish conflict. The German press' propaganda during the conflict successfully linked Jesuits to Jews. In concluding, Griech-Polelle argues that Nazi propagandists tried to prove that Catholicism was against the 'Aryan Germanic spirit'.⁵⁸

Hypothesis

This thesis argues that analyses of Irish newspapers and journals of the Spanish Civil War have overlooked significant historical themes present in the Irish reportage of the conflict. As McGarry has observed, 'little attempt was made to view the civil war in the context of Spanish politics and history: rather, Spain was incorporated into the [Irish] domestic cultural-political discourse'.⁵⁹ This thesis significantly builds upon McGarry's research and employs new sources, particularly from provincial Ireland and Northern Ireland. Therefore,

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 177.

⁵⁹ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 90.

each chapter of this thesis will examine an original theme and demonstrate how the Spanish Civil War was reported in Irish publications.

The themes – the battle for Madrid, the bombing of Guernica, the treatment of Basque children refugees, readers' letters, student publications and press coverage in Donegal and Republican propaganda, have been chosen to explore how a preoccupation with British imperialism and Irish history shaped Irish reportage of the conflict in Spain. The themes will allow me to investigate and broaden understanding of the coverage of the Spanish conflict in Irish publications. The Irish Civil War, the War of Independence, the Black and Tans, the Great Famine and Cromwell's conquest of Ireland all featured in the reportage of Spain. The reportage focuses on issues and events from Irish history to help explain the Spanish Civil War to the reader. The reportage employed biblical and prominent characters from English literature were to illustrate and explain the war to the reader. Poetry, opinions and a focus on Britain's colonial role in Ireland were all used in the reportage.

The themes in the thesis suggest that the reportage was just as focused on Ireland as it was on Spain. The seven themes demonstrate that there is still a vast amount of data to examine concerning Ireland and the Spanish Civil War. They provide a new way to view the conflict in Irish newspapers, outside of the parameters of Catholicism, communism and Republicanism, and expose the preoccupation with and hostility to Britain. This comes across very clearly especially in the case of the evacuation of Basque child refugees, the bombing of Guernica and the points of view expressed in readers' letters. The thesis contains new research that reveals a wealth of data to indicate that there were many individuals who were far from convinced of the merits of Franco's

insurgency. The readers' letters 'chapter is a good example which argues that significant themes from Irish history have been overlooked in the reportage. The chapter on the bombing of Guernica chapter reinforced this point by revealing a connection between Loyalists in Derry and the Basque people of Guernica. The nationalist *Derry People* virtually ignored Guernica. The attack was only mentioned a month after it took place in a sentence that lambasted British hypocrisy over its attitude to the bombing. Furthermore, the previously little-known debate surrounding the evacuation of Basque children to the UK after the attack on Guernica reveals a deep-rooted obsession with proselytism and British policy in Ireland. The chapter on student publications reveals that, despite there not being an active student body that campaigned for or against the civil war in Spain in Ireland, the debates that were held reveal the extent of disagreement and the strength of the personalities involved. The battle for Madrid was covered by McGarry and Stradling but in the context of the arrival of the International Brigades, with an emphasis on the role of the Irish who volunteered. My chapter argues that coverage of the siege was ideologically driven and misreported to the extent that the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* gave different versions of events both underpinned by editorial comment. New perspectives were introduced, such as the *Belfast Telegraph's* and the *Irish News's* use of characters from classic fiction to frame the attack for their readers. My chapter on Donegal's response to the conflict builds on Convery's essay on 'Cork and the Spanish Civil War'. The treatment of the conflict in Donegal newspapers shows why the examination of the rural press is important to the overall coverage in Ireland of the Spanish conflict. The *Donegal Democrat* consistently published local angles on the conflict. My

chapter on propaganda reveals the extent of Republican poetry concerning the Spanish Civil War and demonstrates that the Irish Civil War was a motivating factor for Republicans.

Methodology

To conduct analytical research in Irish newspapers during the Spanish Civil War it is important to be cognisant of the limitations and difficulties that can be encountered when conducting historical newspaper research. One such limitation is the definition of public opinion because it is difficult to measure. Boyce questions whether newspapers should 'reflect public opinion or mould it, lead or follow?'⁶⁰

Content analysis, a stalwart in the study of media history, was not relevant in this case given the numerical and coding aspect to the methodology. Thematic content analysis was not applicable for the same reason. Therefore, the methodology used was a mixed methods approach and one that utilised and took advantage of the development of OCR (optical character recognition) technology, in conjunction with conventional textual analysis. The thesis cites a combination of primary material, both archival documents in the National Library of Ireland and the National Archives in Dublin, as well as secondary sources. The OCR technology, the Irish Newspaper Archive, the British Newspaper Archive and *Irish Times* archive enabled me to find and research the themes for each chapter. Each chapter that utilised OCR technology required unique keywords. One such search was

⁶⁰ David George Boyce, *Englishmen and Irish Troubles: British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy, 1918-22* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), p. 199.

the Spanish Civil War, but for specific subject chapters such as the bombing of Guernica, the evacuation of Basque children and the battle for Madrid, terms such as 'Guernica', 'Basque' and 'Madrid' were used. By selecting these terms, all relevant articles were saved, downloaded and then analysed. In terms of editorials, virtually every relevant editorial was read for these specific chapters. The content of the editorials is one element of the newspaper that helps to build an argument.

The source base for this thesis is newspaper-rich. Over 40 publications have been utilised. The inherent danger of bias from publications is a clear and potential flaw in any such research. However, by taking the individual article, editorial or letters and combining it with an examination of the publications' ownership and editorial staff, and consulting authoritative accounts of the conflict both in Spain and in Ireland, one can attempt to complete the picture. As Fürsich argues, 'textual analysis has the goal to explain which cultural sensibilities prevail that allow for such a text at this specific point in time'.⁶¹ Bingham reinforces this point:

We cannot properly assess the significance of newspaper content without moving beyond the texts themselves and considering the political, social and cultural contexts that the newspapers were operating in.⁶²

The rapid development of OCR technology allows researchers to isolate key words and articles relevant for the research. Furthermore, the continued advancement of OCR technology enables researchers to make wider and broader searches in national and transnational databases online. As

⁶¹ Elfriede Fürsich, 'In Defense of Textual Analysis', *Journalism Studies* 10, no. 2 (2009): 238-252. p. 247.

⁶² Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives', p.230

Nicholson argues, the use of a keyword search does not replace the need for more comprehensive reading but rather 'it is our direct access to individual words that presents the most exciting new methodological possibilities'.⁶³ The process is far from flawless because key words must be identified. To do this, the researcher needs 'intimate knowledge of the culture and texts that are being studied' that can only come from conventional qualitative textual analysis of key texts associated with the hypothesis.⁶⁴ There is a danger, argued by Bingham, argued that 'keyword blinkers' are 'bypassing' the newspaper article's context.⁶⁵ Although one should be cognisant of these methodological pitfalls, the potential gained from the advancement in technology is one that should be explored for the advancement of academic research.

The role of newspapers in historical research is not redundant in the face of the digitization of newspapers. As Bingham argued 'keyword searches should be used in conjunction with, rather than replacing, the careful study of whole newspapers'.⁶⁶ Where any OCR software was not available for example for the *Donegal Democrat*, *Donegal Vindicator*, *Northern Whig*, one had to research and analyse the newspaper from microfilm according to each chapter's terms of reference.

Several newspapers were not digitised at the time of research. This provided a methodical problem and required a conventional analysis of newspapers to replace unavailable digitised material. Each thematic chapter

⁶³ Bob Nicholson, 'The Digital Turn', *Media History*, 19:1 (2013), p. 67.

⁶⁴ Adrian Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.21, No.2 (2010), p. 230.

⁶⁵ Nicholson, 'The Digital Turn', p. 61.

⁶⁶ Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives', p. 230.

in the research was researched using key search terms and where appropriate, a date range. The dates for the research were from 17 July 1936 to 1 April 1939. The inherent difficulties of using newspapers as a primary source, such as reliability, accuracy, bias and representation, all have to be given due consideration. This however should not distract from the newspapers key place in writing and researching history. As Tibbo argues, newspapers have and will continue to remain 'vital' as a primary source to help the researcher identify and analyse 'public opinion'.⁶⁷ By conducting research in public record offices and archives, the owners, editors and foreign correspondents help complete the overall picture of the newspaper. One cannot be done without the other. The Spanish Civil War was no different to other conflicts analysed by newspaper coverage. As O'Brien has argued, 'dichotomies were reinforced by press coverage of the conflict' in Irish newspapers during the Spanish Civil War.⁶⁸ Ireland was not alone in this respect. As Knightley argued, editors in the US developed stories and analysis based on the perceived biases of their readership:

In America, the conflict provoked intense levels of partisanship, particularly in Chicago and New York. Fully aware that high numbers of readers were from the Catholic Italian and Irish communities, owners and editors were under huge pressure to deliver a succession of atrocity stories rather than discuss the controversial political and social roots to the violence. The Church scrutinised the editorial policies of newspapers through organisations such as the International Catholic Truth Society. A daily news service, The National Catholic Welfare Conference, delivered a steady flow of news items to the American faithful.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Helen, Tibbo, 'Primarily History: Historians and the Search for Primary Source Materials', *JCDL*, 1-10 (2002), p. 2.

⁶⁸ O'Brien, "'In War-Torn Spain': The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War", p. 346.

⁶⁹ Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000 edition), p. 215.

His analysis reflects of the *Irish Independent's* coverage, as well as the letters and opinion pieces drafted by Fr Stephen J. Brown who argued that publications such as the *Irish Times* did not convey the extent of the church burnings and clerical murders.⁷⁰ Indeed, notwithstanding the difficulties in using newspapers as a key primary source, newspapers contain data and information that cannot be found elsewhere. The 'Letters to the Editor' section is one example of this but editorials are also key in establishing a newspapers' bias. One has to carefully consider the editor's politics, if known and those of the newspaper's owner. The accepted difficulties in newspaper research should not prevent the newspapers from being a legitimate source of history, to be 'viewed as a discourse' and a first draft of history.⁷¹ Newspapers in the 1930s were the primary source of information of the general public. This cannot be disputed and therefore the data contained 'reflect social and cultural values of a certain place and time and often contain unique information that cannot be found anywhere else'.⁷²

Dublin Newspapers and Reporters

The main daily Dublin newspapers sent reporters to the conflict in Spain, at different times and for different periods. The *Irish Times* established in 1859 as a pro-union publication was designed to represent southern unionism. The

⁷⁰ See *Readers' Letters* chapter for more discussion on Stephen Brown and his letters.

⁷¹ Martin, Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History*, (London: Sage, 2004), p. 3-6.

⁷² Sanjica Tanacković, Maja Krtalić, Darko Lacović, 'Newspapers as a Research Source: Information Needs and Information Seeking of Humanities Scholars'. In *Digital Transformation and the Changing Role of News Media in the 21st Century*, IFLA Newspapers Section Pre-Conference.(2014), p. 1.

paper was critical of the Anglo-Irish Treaty but by 1932 had become accustomed to the Irish Free-State and Fianna Fail's election victory in 1932. In the 1930s the paper had a circulation of 25,500 per issue and edited by Robert Marie Smylie.⁷³ According to Bowyer Bell the *Irish Times* reported 'some of the most factual, balanced editorial analyses to be found in Europe'.⁷⁴ The *Times*' coverage of the war in Spain was 'unrepentant in its support for the democratically elected socialist-republican government that came to power' but noted that the conflict was being 'distorted grossly by Europe's yellow press'.⁷⁵ It was the coverage by the *Irish Times* that upset the clergy in Ireland. There were attempts within clerical circles to deny the paper advertising revenues due to their reporting of the conflict which included a visit to the editor by a priest. According to McGarry 'virtually all Catholic education advertising' was withdrawn.⁷⁶

The *Irish Times* dispatched Lionel Fleming to assess the basis of the conflict. His reports were published in a 10-part series through August and September 1936 and argued that the conflict was a 'legitimate struggle, both against the evils of Nazism and Fascism and the claim of the Catholic Church, that it should be allowed to control almost every aspect of Spanish life'.⁷⁷ The editor, Robert Marie Smylie told Fleming 'I don't give a bugger what your conclusions are, so long as they're honest'. Fleming's reports from Spain

⁷³ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 347.

⁷⁴ Bowyer-Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', pp. 160.

⁷⁵ O'Brien, *The Irish Times A History*, pp. 89-90

⁷⁶ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 164-65.

⁷⁷ Lionel Fleming, *Head or Harp* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965) p. 169.

upset the local Irish clergy who threatened to pull their custom from the paper.⁷⁸

The *Irish Independent* was established in 1905 by William Murphy and was Ireland's first mass-market newspaper and was half the price of its rivals. The *Independent's* editorial line was conservative, vehemently anti-communist and solidly Catholic. For the *Independent*, the war in Spain was a war against Communism to save Catholicism. The *Independent* dispatched Gertrude Gaffney and published her reports under the heading 'In war-torn Spain'. Gaffney's dispatches from Spain, perhaps prompted by Fleming's series in the *Times*, reported the conflict from the *Independent's* standpoint and did not analyse the origins of the conflict.⁷⁹ As O'Brien notes, her reports sought to 'stress the commonalities between Spain and Ireland. Her reports focused on the Irish Brigade and suggested the men had come to Spain to 'fight for Christianity – and for nothing else'. The newspaper also published freelance material from Francis McCullagh, the veteran war correspondent who had previously covered conflicts in Russia and Mexico. McCullagh was attracted to war like 'a moth to a candle' but his encounters with the Irish Brigade were far from encouraging, as he was less than impressed with it. In Horgan's account of McCullagh he suggests the journalist received 'enough complaints from the ordinary Irish members of O'Duffy's brigade that – had he wanted to – he could have written articles about a thousand scandals'. McCullagh's sympathies were with the rank and file of the Irish Brigade and he praised

⁷⁸ John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2009), pp. 90-92.

⁷⁹ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 351.

them in the *Independent* while remaining silent on atrocities carried out by the Nationalist forces. That made him an ideal journalist for the *Independent*.⁸⁰

The *Irish Press*, owned by Éamon de Valera, had a circulation of 95,000 per issue by 1935. O'Brien states the paper played an important role in Fianna Fáil winning the general election in 1932. The paper was 'closer' to the *Independent* than it was to the *Irish Times* and closely followed the government's line throughout the Spanish Civil War of neutrality. The paper's ethos was Catholic and was careful to present Fianna Fáil's policies as 'compliant with Pope XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*'.⁸¹ Its editor during this period was Frank Gallagher.⁸² The paper differentiated itself from the *Independent* and the *Times* by dispatching Bernard James Gannon disguised as a volunteer for the Irish Brigade. This novel approach ultimately failed as it resulted in the dismissal of the managing editor, Chris O'Sullivan. The paper reported an exclusive, with an undercover interview with Commandant Edward John Cronin, one of the founders of the Army Comrades Association, the precursor to O'Duffy's Blueshirt movement. The endeavour ultimately ended in acrimony after Cronin claimed that the interview was false and was an attempt to 'stab in the back the Catholics of Spain'.⁸³

⁸⁰ John Horgan, 'Journalism, Catholicism and Anti Catholicism in an Era of Revolution: Francis McCullagh, War Correspondent, 1874-1956', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 98, no. 390 (2015): 169–84, pp. 180-181.

⁸¹ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 347.

⁸² McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies*, p. 70.

⁸³ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 354.

The Irish Political Response to the Spanish Civil War

Irish newspapers began publishing accounts of pitched battles and disturbances in Spain on 20 July 1936 and as O'Connor observes, 'there was no escaping the Spanish question in Ireland' due to the 'lurid accounts of anti-clerical atrocities'.⁸⁴ Political reaction in Ireland was slow to appreciate the implications of the conflict because although Ireland had historical ties with Spain the Irish Free State 'had few political interests in Spain'.⁸⁵ The Left in the Free State was articulate but small in numbers in the 1930s and trade unions and the Labour Party were relatively conservative.⁸⁶ On the right, the Fascist Blueshirts were in decline and overshadowed by the rapid growth of the ICF under Patrick Belton. In Northern Ireland the two dominant groupings, Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists viewed the situation in Spain through their own community-minded lens.

After ten years in power the Treatyite party, Cumann na nGaedheal, led by W.T. Cosgrave, was defeated in the 1932 election. The economic slump of the 1930s had not helped. Despite accusing Fianna Fáil of being communists, the 'red scare' tactic did not win the election.⁸⁷ Fianna Fáil was ushered into power, supported by the Labour Party, 'to pursue progressive legislation'. The victory of Fianna Fáil would lock Fine Gael out of power for 16 years. In the general election of 1933, Fianna Fáil won convincingly without the need of a coalition partner. McNally argues that despite Fianna Fáil signing

⁸⁴ O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 216.

⁸⁵ Bell Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', p. 137.

⁸⁶ Bell Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', p. 138.

⁸⁷ Mark McNally, 'Fianna Fáil and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939: The Rhetoric of Hegemony and Equilibrium', p. 77.

up to the Non-Intervention Act in February 1937, the party's grass roots would have been 'amenable to some extent at least to rhetoric of the pro-Spanish Republic lobby in Ireland'.⁸⁸

Éamon de Valera came to power after the elections in 1932, following a tumultuous journey from the founding of the state. De Valera had fought during the 1916 Rising and the War of Independence. As President of the Republic, a role changed by the Dáil in 1921, de Valera did not attend the Treaty negotiations in London. The subsequent conflict resulting from the signing of the Treaty led to the Irish Civil War. Unlike O'Duffy, de Valera supported the anti-treaty side during the Irish Civil War. The inclusion of an oath of allegiance to the British Crown was too much for de Valera, who had envisioned a Republic. In March 1926 de Valera formed a new Republican party, Fianna Fáil. In the 1927 general election Fianna Fáil usurped Sinn Féin's dominant role in Republican politics. Éamon de Valera's role as President of the Executive Council (soon to be re-established as that of Taoiseach after the new constitution in 1937) saw him take the reins of Irish foreign policy. The 1930s was a difficult political era to navigate due to the swing to the right in European politics as well as the Abyssinia crisis of 1935 which saw Ireland impose sanctions on Italy. The Spanish Civil War the war stirred emotion in the Irish public especially during 1936-37. Reports of violence against clerics and churches being desecrated captured and enraged Irish public opinion.⁸⁹ De Valera's own newspaper, the *Irish Press* 'espoused a Catholic ethos' but not to the extent of the *Independent*.⁹⁰ De Valera's leadership immediately

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

⁸⁹ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies*, p. 70.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

came under sustained pressure in August 1936 for his refusal to cut diplomatic ties to the Spanish government. This pressure would increase when Ireland signed the Non-Intervention Act proposed by France and Britain. The act was aimed at preventing volunteers who were headed to Spain to fight. Crucially, the Irish Brigade, headed by O'Duffy, left for Spain before the signing of the act in February 1937. Éire did not recognize Franco's regime until February 1939.

The Blueshirts were on the wane by July 1936 under the leadership of Eoin O'Duffy. The movement was originally intended to protect Cumann na nGaedheal meetings after Fianna Fáil took power in 1932. O'Duffy's career was varied, to say the least. He was associated with the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Volunteers had served with the IRA in his home county of Monaghan during the War of Independence. O'Duffy sided with the pro-Treaty Republicans, alongside Michael Collins. During the Irish Civil War, he was posted to a south-western military command. At the end of the conflict, he was appointed Garda Commissioner.⁹¹ McGarry argues that O'Duffy's energy and enthusiasm were suited to the role, but his record was mixed. He was dismissed by de Valera in February 1933 – most likely due to his association with the security policy of Cumann na Gaedheal.⁹² O'Duffy was present when Fine Gael were formed. After his sacking as commissioner, he headed the Army Comrades Association (ACA) – later to be named the National Guard, the forerunner of the Blueshirts.⁹³ Deeply anti-communist, the Blueshirts popularity was widespread and they increasingly clashed with the

⁹¹ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 18.

⁹² *Irish Times*, 22 September 2015.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

IRA. After de Valera banned the Blueshirts, the National Guard, members of the Centre Party and Cumann na Gaedheal formed Fine Gael and O'Duffy became its first president. He stayed in this role until 1934 when his fractious relationship with Ned Cronin came to the fore. O'Duffy's former comrades sided with Cronin rather than the increasingly aggressive and authoritarian O'Duffy. It was this resignation, argues McGarry, that led O'Duffy to develop further links and associations with European fascism.⁹⁴

O'Duffy's flirtation with fascism eventually led him to lead the Irish Brigade to Spain to fight for Franco. Cardinal MacRory had suggested O'Duffy for role in a letter in the *Independent* which 'struck a chord among frustrated anti-communists'.⁹⁵ He led 700 men from throughout Ireland on a crusade to aid Franco's insurgency.⁹⁶ The idea of Ireland's ancient kinship with Catholic Spain was used to promote recruitment to the Irish Brigade – undoubtedly this attracted O'Duffy to the role.⁹⁷ The vast majority of O'Duffy's men had been enlisted with the Catholic Church's support in early autumn and left Galway in December. Their record in Spain was abysmal with reports of drunkenness, ill-discipline and the men being 'sick, tired, homesick, and disgruntled'.⁹⁸ It was the return from Spain of O'Duffy's men and the mismanagement of the funds raised for Franco that led to the downfall of the ICF. These events ensured that Spain was not the only story in the newspapers after 1937 thus diminishing the power of the pro-Franco lobby in Ireland.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 24. see also: Readers' Letters chapter.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹⁷ Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, p.30.

⁹⁸ Bell Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *Studia Hibernica* No.9 (1969): 137–63. p. 154.

Opposition to Fianna Fáil's policy of neutrality and non-intervention in Spain was primarily directed by the ICF, established on 22 August 1936 by Alexander McCabe. The ICF was a key component in the pro-Franco camp in Ireland during the Spanish Civil War, and was in part organized to help Catholic Spain, but was also established to 'fight' against communism in Ireland. Although the ICF faced tiny numbers of communists and socialists, it strived to promote a 'popular appeal to anti-communism'.⁹⁹ Indeed, the Executive Committee of the Communist International felt that the ICF would mount a fascist-type campaign against Éamon de Valera in the upcoming elections and strengthen 'developments toward fascism in Ireland'.¹⁰⁰ Anti-clerical reports and 'eye-witness' reports from Irish citizens in Spain flooded Irish newspapers columns in August 1936. These reports deeply affected Irish public opinion against the Republican government in Spain and strengthened the pro-Franco lobby.¹⁰¹ The leaders of the ICF were Patrick Belton, president, Dr James P. Brennan, vice president, Aileen O'Brien, organising secretary, Alexander McCabe, secretary, and Liam Breen. Belton, who had been expelled from Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, was arguably the most prominent of the group and hinted at the creation of a new group to oppose the government's stance on the war in Spain. They would oppose trade with Republican Spain and rally against the sanctions imposed on Spain by Dublin.¹⁰² During the early months of the Spanish Civil War the ICF grew rapidly. There were large rallies in Dublin and Cork with the second meeting

⁹⁹ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁰ Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-43* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), p. 220.

¹⁰¹ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 70.

¹⁰² McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 111.

of the ICF in Dublin attracted 40,000 supporters.¹⁰³ The reach of the ICF was extensive.

The Ardara Ancient Order of Hibernians Division in Donegal held a meeting which called on the government, 'to sever all association with the Spanish Communist Government and pledging support to the Irish Christian Front'.¹⁰⁴ Pro-Franco protests were mainly orchestrated by the ICF in Donegal. They were accused by 'radical republicans and socialist' of having fascist sympathies.¹⁰⁵ Reports of their meetings were carried in Donegal newspapers but no large-scale protests or meetings were reported to have taken place in Donegal, unlike larger urban areas of the country.¹⁰⁶ A Blueshirt demonstration was held in Letterkenny that attracted over 100 uniformed members, with Captain M. McGeehan warning that there were 'a few corner boys who are opposed to us. We are not afraid of them. Let them realise that, because if it was not for the Guards we would very soon clear away the crowd that is about.'¹⁰⁷ Captain McGeehan then read a St Patrick's day message from General O'Duffy. The ACA was proscribed after the general election in 1933 and the group merged with the Centre Party and Cumann na nGaedheal to form Fine Gael.¹⁰⁸ O'Duffy toured Donegal in December 1932 and pledged that Cumann na nGaedheal would 'put agriculture on its feet', a clear reference

¹⁰³ *Irish Times*, 21 September 1936.

¹⁰⁴ *Derry People*, 26 September 1936.

¹⁰⁵ McGarry, *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study*, p. 26. See also: *Donegal News* 10 April 1937.

¹⁰⁶ McGarry, *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁷ Mike Cronin, 'Blueshirts, Sports and Socials by Mike Cronin' *History Ireland*, sue 3, Vol 2, 1994 (<http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/blueshirts-sports-and-socials-by-mike-cronin/>) See also *Derry People*, 24 March 1934.

¹⁰⁸ Fearghal McGarry, 'General O'Duffy, the National Corporate Party and the Irish Brigade', p.118 *quoted in* Augusteijn, Joost, ed., *Ireland in the 1930s New Perspectives* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 1999).

to Fianna Fail's economic war with Britain.¹⁰⁹ At a rally in Donegal Town people were evicted by Blueshirts after shouts of 'Up Dev' to which O'Duffy reportedly replied to the protestor, 'Don't mind him, he's winking at me'. Blueshirts were arrested in the county and questioned, but the police did not approach O'Duffy. One scuffle resulted in shots being fired at the car of W. T. Cosgrave as he emerged from a meeting in Annagry.¹¹⁰ Similar incidents occurred throughout O'Duffy's tour of Donegal. By September 1935 there were 160 Blueshirts in the county.¹¹¹

In Limerick and Galway there was considerable support for the ICF. One rally in Waterford attracted 12,000 people.¹¹² Funding for supplies to Spain was also important. The ICF collected in £43,331 for Spain in 1936-37. Raphoe in Donegal raised £948.¹¹³ Indeed, in Moscow, the Comintern was surprised that such a large figure had been collected by 'the poverty-stricken people [of Ireland] to help the Spanish Fascists'.¹¹⁴ The ICF's manifesto explicitly called on the population to help fund the supplies needed to help Spain in her hour of need. This was instead of any military commitment, playing on the silent majority's anxiety to help Spanish Catholics, but also on its desire to avoid another civil war.¹¹⁵ Appeals were published in national newspapers:

We, therefore, appeal to the Irish people in the words of the Cardinal for "help from our purses for the medical supplies for the sick and wounded of the Christian Front in Spain. The time to help is now and

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Times*, 9 December 1932.

¹¹⁰ Maurice Manning, *The Blueshirts* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd, 1970), pp. 110-112.

¹¹¹ Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 115.

¹¹² McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 122.

¹¹³ *Irish Catholic*, 10 December 1936, quoted in Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), pp. 161-162.

¹¹⁴ O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 220.

¹¹⁵ Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, p. 12.

all subscriptions should be sent at once to the Trustees of the Irish Christian Front, Mansion House, Dublin. We have established through lines of communication with the battlefields in Spain and can guarantee safe delivery of any goods despatched.¹¹⁶

The government viewed the ICF as acting not only on issues relating to Spain. As McGarry notes, the ICF aimed to 'unmask communism' in Ireland.¹¹⁷ The ICF was ridiculed by some Republicans and socialists as a fascist group, built on the remains of the Blueshirts. The government saw it 'more as an anti-government pressure group' and 'an opportunistic attempt by Fine Gael and the far-right to mobilise public opinion on a sensitive foreign policy issue'.¹¹⁸ The influence of the ICF began to wane by mid 1937 for several reasons. Firstly, after the collapse of the northern front in Spain, news from the civil war, and especially news of anti-clerical violence receded. The headlines were not as prominent and therefore did not affect the Irish public to the same extent. As McGarry notes, the 'lengthy military campaigns involving Italy and Germany made the original depiction of the conflict as Christians against communists more difficult to sustain'.¹¹⁹ The public had largely accepted De Valera's insistence on the Non-Intervention Act. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War was barely raised as an electoral issue during the 1937 general election.¹²⁰ The withdrawal of O'Duffy's Irish Brigade from Spain stoked fears in Ireland that it could be used as a fascist force in Ireland. These fears did not materialise. There was no fascist insurrection in Ireland. The build-up to

¹¹⁶ *Irish Press*, 21 September 1936.

¹¹⁷ Fearghal McGarry, 'Catholics First and Politicians Afterwards': The Labour Party and the Workers' Republic, 1936-39', *Saothar*, Vol. 25 (2000): pp. 57-65, p. 58.

¹¹⁸ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 111.

¹¹⁹ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 134.

¹²⁰ McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', p. 38.

another wide-scale war in Europe became to dominate the headlines in mid to late 1937.

On the left of Irish politics in the 'fledgling Irish state', stood the Republican Congress.¹²¹ The Congress was established to unite 'socialists, republican workers and small farmers'. The Congress arose from differences within the IRA over co-operation with the CPI. Efforts to get the 1934 army convention to support a 'united front' led to a split.¹²² The Congress's first general assembly took place in Rathmines in September 1934 and included delegates from the CPI, the Irish Citizen Army, trades' councils and trade unions.¹²³ However, the vision of the congress was contested. Some in the organising committee, such as Michael Price, the former IRA leader, and Roddy Connolly, the son of James Connolly, desired a socialist republican party. The minority of the organizing committee, including Peadar O'Donnell, wanted a 'united front' and 'the subordination of socialist objectives to republicanism'.¹²⁴ Although O'Donnell, George Gilmore and Frank Ryan won the day, by 1936 their efforts to build a broad left had failed. The IRA and the Labour Party remained alienated, and only the CPI was willing to collaborate with the Republican Congress. Nonetheless, the war in Spain consolidated the Republican Congress in the short term.

Seán Murray was a Republican, journalist and Communist leader who was born in Antrim in 1898 to Cushendall farmers. Murry joined the IRA in 1919 and joined the anti-treaty forces during the Irish Civil War. During the

¹²¹ O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 346.

¹²² O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', p. 346.

¹²³ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 86-87.

¹²⁴ Fearghal McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 87.

Spanish Civil War Murray was the General Secretary of the CPI, established in 1933.¹²⁵ Although small in numbers, especially outside Dublin and Belfast, the CPI and the Republican Congress were two sides of the same coin during this period – both supported the Spanish Republic. Under the leadership of Murray, the CPI launched the *Worker* and it was the only publication in Ireland to back the Republic before the appearance of the *Irish Democrat*. Issued between 11 July 1936 and 13 March 1937, it was a four-page weekly and cost one penny.¹²⁶ Séan Murray was its editor and penned most articles. As Emmet O'Connor observed, 'the paper judged people by their stand on the war, and even by the terminology they used to describe the forces in conflict'. Indeed, the paper ensured the 'Catholic' view of the conflict was rebutted, and ridiculed the 'crusade for religion' and 'lionised Catholic critics of Franco'.¹²⁷

Along with Murray and the CPI, Sam Haslett, Chairman of the Socialist Party of Northern Ireland and Paddy Byrne, Joint-Secretary of the Republican Congress, launched the *Irish Democrat* on 27 March 1937. Published by Progressive Publications Society, it was 8 pages in length and came out on a weekly basis.¹²⁸ The first editor of the paper was Frank Ryan who was on 'convalescence' from action in Spain in June 1937. When Ryan returned to the front he was succeeded by Seán Murray as editor. O'Connor argued that the *Irish Democrat* was 'a big improvement on the *Worker*' and contained a broader array of writers while keeping its focus on Spain.¹²⁹ Although the

¹²⁵ Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, p. 130.

¹²⁶ Pete Jackson, "A Rather One Sided Fight" *Saothar*, 23, (1998), p. 79.

¹²⁷ O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 215.

¹²⁸ Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939'. p. 156 see also: Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-43*, p. 117.

¹²⁹ O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, p. 217.

raison d'être of the publication was to unite the working class, the paper's devotion to the Republican cause in Spain was strong. It consistently emphasised Irish links to the conflict.¹³⁰ In one article Ryan linked the fighting in Spain to Ireland's battle for freedom:

Republican Spain was fighting O'Duffy and his 'Black and Tan' Brigade before they ever set foot on Spanish territory, because in defending democracy, they are fighting its enemies throughout the world. And, in attacking the liberties of the Spanish, O'Duffy is attacking those of the Irish people.¹³¹

The paper soon became a victim of infighting between the Socialist Party and the Republican Congress. The Socialist Party's objection to the paper's republican slant eventually caused it to withdraw its support. As O'Connor contends, Murray blamed the loss of the Socialist Party for financial pressure that led its demise.¹³²

The Irish Left during the Spanish Civil War, one could argue, was best characterized by the 'charismatic figure' of Frank Ryan who has been described as 'one of the more heroic figures of modern Irish radicalism'.¹³³ He was an anti-imperialist and one of the leaders of the Republican Congress. Ryan, who was the leader of the Irish in the International Brigades, had fought on the Anti-Treaty side of the Irish Civil War in the 1920s and been interned. He studied at University College, Dublin and subsequently taught Irish before becoming a journalist. In 1929 he was elected to the IRA's army council. An exceptional journalist and writer, Ryan contributed to the IRA's *An Phoblacht* from 1925 and took over the editorship from Peadar O'Donnell in 1930.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

¹³¹ *Irish Democrat*, 27 March 1937.

¹³² O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, pp. 222-223.

¹³³ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*. p. 48 & p. 77.

Ryan was the notional leader of the Irishmen serving in the International Brigades. Initially Irishmen fought under the British Battalion in Spain, but then left to join the Lincoln Battalion.¹³⁴ McGarry contrasts Ryan's departure from Ireland with his men to that of O'Duffy. Whereas O'Duffy's men were showered with prayers and blessings, Ryan's men slipped 'quietly away to Spain telling only a few friends of their decision'.¹³⁵

While recuperating from an injury he received during the battle of Jarama, Ryan stood as a candidate for the 'United front against Fascism' in the 1937 General Election. Before the election Ryan returned to Spain but was captured by Italian troops in 1938 and sentenced to death. The original candidate, Bill Scott, withdrew to allow full support to muster behind Ryan. The result, probably not unexpected, was dismal. He received 875 votes.¹³⁶ The atmosphere of anti-Communism was high in Ireland and inextricably associated with the Spanish government and by extension the International Brigades.

An early comrade of Frank Ryan was the young poet, Charles Donnelly. Born in Tyrone, Northern Ireland to a farming family and enrolled in UCD in 1931. Donnelly, a Republican who followed the ideals of Marxism, was an early supporter of the Republican Congress. He was elected on the National Executive and urged Ryan and Congress to support to the Spanish

¹³⁴ Historians are divided as to whether they jumped rather than fight in a British unit, or were pushed out by the commissars to split the Irish between the British and American battalions and prevent the creation of an Irish unit, which would be largely non-communist.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102-103.

Government.¹³⁷ Donnelly joined the International Brigades in December 1936 and was killed in action on the Jarama Front in February 1937.

In Northern Ireland, nationalist views on the Spanish Civil War were overwhelmingly pro-Franco due to the anti-clerical nature of the violence whereas Protestant opinion was more ambivalent and content to 'leave foreign policy to the British Government'.¹³⁸ The war in Spain was never mentioned by Ulster Unionist MPs, nor did they contribute to debates on the conflict at Westminster. This seemingly negligent view on the situation in Spain suggests an indifference to a foreign conflict, but also hints at a desire to strengthen the Northern Ireland state. One exception in Northern Ireland was Harry Midgley, leader of the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP) and MP for Dock. Midgley was a Protestant who supported the Spanish Republic and accused some nationalist newspapers of spreading mistruths about the violence and the Spanish Government.¹³⁹ As O'Connor described it, the only place in Northern Ireland to find anti-Franco activism outside the communist-republican 'rubric' was in the NILP and the Socialist Party, Northern Ireland (SPNI).¹⁴⁰ Support for the Spanish Republic, as in the Free State, was in part organised by the CPI, but also by the SPNI and the NILP. Working-class Catholic opinion was pro-Franco and support was organised by the ICF, including that of bringing people from Northern Ireland to Dublin to attend rallies.¹⁴¹ ICF branches were established in Belfast and the numbers at its rallies consistently surpassed the RUC's estimates of likely attendance figures. It is important to note that the

¹³⁷ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 150-52. See also p. 172 for details of his student activism.

¹³⁸ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 176.

¹³⁹ See pages 184-85 for more details on Harry Midgley

¹⁴⁰ Bell Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', p. 138.

¹⁴¹ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 174.

Irish News did not support the Belfast ICF rallies and conferences as did not have any political or clerical support.¹⁴² Catholic support for Franco and from 'less enthusiastic' Protestants inevitably gave rise to tension in partisan editorials and coverage from Spain. As McGarry notes the tensions were largely to do with the consequence of 'sectarian tensions between both communities' but there was some 'deliberate baiting' of Catholics by Unionist publications.¹⁴³

¹⁴² McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 175.

¹⁴³ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 174.

Chapter One

At the gates of Madrid: - Public Opinion and the Battle for Madrid

‘Five months of fierce warfare have brought the Patriot Armies to the gates of Madrid.’¹

Even the olives were bleeding
As the battle for Madrid it thundered on
Truth and love against the force of evil
Brotherhood against the fascist clan.²

The quotes above exemplify the contrasting opinions in Ireland during the siege of Madrid, and the way in which control of the city became of huge symbolic importance to the politics of the civil war and the perceived legitimacy of the contesting causes. The editorial in *The Cross* described the siege of Madrid from the Nationalist point of view using its preferred term for Franco’s insurgent forces, the ‘Patriot Armies’. The editorial’s opinion was true for the majority of the press in Ireland, both religious and secular. Christy Moore’s ballad to the International Brigades from 1984 reflected support for the Second Republic, depicting Franco’s forces as ‘evil’. For Franco’s fervent backers, the *Irish Independent*, the *Derry Journal* and the *Irish News*, the city had to fall. For supporters of the Madrid government, who were sceptical about Franco’s insurgency, the *Irish Times*, *Londonderry Sentinel* and the *Belfast Telegraph*, the city had to hold back the tide of Fascism sweeping over the Spanish plains.

This chapter considers the reportage of the siege from 6 to 19 November and how Irish newspapers utilised press agency reports and their own editorials to frame the siege for their readers. The 6 to 19 November was, according to Stradling the ‘active’ period of the siege and one that terrified

¹ *The Cross*, December 1936.

² Christy Moore “Viva la Quinta Brigada” Lyrics (<http://www.christymoore.com/lyrics/viva-la-quinta-brigada/> accessed November 14, 2016).

civilians and journalists.³ The 19 November marked the end of 'intense' aerial attacks on Madrid and resulted in a standoff that lasted until April 1939. The siege of Madrid was a crucial factor in the formation of Irish public opinion and the coverage of the siege in Irish newspapers helped to crystalize opinion in Ireland with regard to the Spanish Civil War. The siege was implicitly a litmus test for supporters in Ireland. For the Francoists, the battle for Madrid was initially seen as an easy victory which would confirm their view that the Madrid government was chaotic and had little support. If the city held, the resistance would show that Fascism was not invincible.

The chapter is divided into three sections and the newspapers researched include the *Belfast Telegraph*, *Irish News*, *Derry Journal*, *Londonderry Sentinel*, *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times*. Firstly, this chapter will analyse the reportage during the siege that constructed the narrative that victory was either imminent for Franco or that the population of Madrid was holding back a fascist dictator. Making the distinction between a heroic resistance or an inevitable victory was important because a victory for either side would have vindicated the propaganda-like coverage devoted to the siege, as well as the use of pejorative descriptions on both sides. The attacks resulted in explosive headlines that conflicted with the truth. Wildly inaccurate sub-headings on the progress of the siege expounded a narrative that could have potentially influenced Irish public opinion. The second area of analysis will examine the coverage of the Soviet resupply of the Republican government which changed the battlefield composition. Madrid could now

³ Robert Stradling, *Your Children Will Be Next Bombing and Propaganda in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 56.

defend itself and ward off Nationalist fighter aircraft and an increase in Russian officers and personnel added depth and strength to depleted Republican ground forces. The portrayal of the resupply in editorials and headlines constructed an alternative narrative depending on which newspaper one was reading. For the Catholic-orientated press the 'Red forces' of Moscow were destroying Spain whereas the papers that backed the Madrid Government, in some cases reluctantly, acknowledged the change in the resources available to the Republic. Thirdly, this chapter will show how the dearth of information from Madrid led to publication of stories that were inaccurate and false that might have had a dramatic effect on popular opinion in Ireland.

Madrid in late autumn 1936 represented the crucible of the civil war. The siege of Madrid began what would become a three-year standoff with the Republic. The city would not fall to Franco until April 1939. Franco's advance to the capital had slowed to a crawl and the Republican government had begun to utilise its resupply of weapons, ammunition and fighter aircraft to its advantage. Madrid mattered on two fronts. Firstly, it was the capital of Spain and held cultural and historical importance for its citizens. Its defence by the Republican government, or a swift capture by Franco's forces, could have tilted the civil war either way. A victory by Franco could have signalled the beginning of the Republic's demise.⁴ Furthermore, the siege of Madrid was the first to involve modern fighter aircraft. Before this, no city had ever experienced aerial attacks, which would become commonplace during the second world war.⁵ The fact that the city did not fall until the spring of 1939 ensured that the

⁴ Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, p. 22.

⁵ Stradling, *Your Children Will Be Next*, pp. 55-56.

ancient capital remained a focus for both parties in the conflict until the bitter end. Therefore, the reporting of the siege in Irish newspapers was a significant factor in the formulation of Irish public opinion.

The battle for Madrid has been researched thoroughly by academics, but the reportage in Ireland has not attracted scholarly attention.⁶ What this chapter seeks to show is the level of reportage produced by Irish newspapers during the siege of Madrid and how this affected public opinion. The significance of the reportage during this period cannot be overestimated because the conflicting accounts in the newspapers, coupled with fervent support for either side, created a situation in which newspaper articles and editorials acted as propaganda pieces for the belligerents. Essentially, the battle for Madrid acted as a litmus test for Irish newspapers in the first winter of the civil war.

Easy Victory or Heroic Resistance – Ideological Differences

For almost four months Christianity has been fighting for its life in Spain. The Communists in every country, and their sympathisers in the Press, have propagated the lie that the fight is one between Fascism and Democracy. It is not. It is a fight between the Faith and Antichrist. All the subsequent events have proved how correct was the *Irish Independent* when it declared in the first week of the civil war that this is 'a fight to the death between Communism...and all who stand for the ancient Faith and traditions of Spain.'⁷

For the *Irish Independent* to quote from an editorial from the beginning of the war arguing that it was right to back Franco's insurgency was not particularly unusual. The *Independent*, one could argue, felt the balance was tilting towards General Franco's insurgency and the religious crusade that was

⁶ See: Ibid., pp. 43-62, pp. 166-185. Preston Paul, *We Saw Spain Die* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2008), p. 22-61.

⁷ *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1936.

taking hold in Spain. The *Independent's* coverage on 6 November was strident in its belief that it was not a war between Fascism and democracy, it was between 'Faith and Antichrist' and the final stage in Madrid had proved that. In the same edition an article carried the headline, 'Reds Making Last Stand' and according to 'Patriot Headquarters' the fighting in Madrid's suburbs was fierce. Key staff were being mobilised to take control of 'railways, telegraph systems and other public services'.⁸ Clearly, Reuters thought the capital would fall.

However, the *Irish Times* reported an alternative version of events on 6 November. There were no grand statements proclaiming that a victory was near, rather the opposite. The paper claimed that five aeroplanes had been shot down by Republican forces under the headline 'A City of Barricades – Madrid not Easy to Take – Five Insurgent planes down'.⁹ The report was from J.R. Allwork of Reuters. The tone and content are at odds with what appeared in the *Independent*. In the *Times'* article the 'Patriotic' forces of the *Independent's* article are gone, and instead described as 'insurgent'.

The author of the report, J.R. Allwork, was the first journalist to inform Reuters of the civil war by wiring London cryptically 'Uncle Charlie dies tonight' which the London staff at first failed to take notice of, thinking he was drunk. Allwork, whose work featured heavily in Irish newspapers throughout the conflict, and particularly this period in question, was one of two Reuter's journalists posted in the Republican zone, with a further two in the heavily regulated and censored Nationalist zone.¹⁰

⁸ *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1936.

⁹ *Irish Times*, 6 November 1936.

¹⁰ Donald Read, *The Power of News: The History of Reuters*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 238.

The rapid escalation of the civil war had taken observers by surprise and even the Irish government felt that the impending battle for Madrid would be over in a short amount of time, bringing the issue of whether to recognise Franco's regime to the surface. Writing on 11 November 1936 to Joseph P. Walsh, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Michael Rynne, then Head of the League of Nations Section at the Department, wrote:

It seems fairly certain that General Franco's forces will succeed in capturing the Spanish capital at an early date. When that happens, a new Government will doubtless be set up in Madrid. Franco's Government may be expected to claim the *de jure* right to govern all Spain, whether occupied or not by his troops.¹¹

Rynne's view was justifiable in this regard, as the information on the ground was scattered and scant. By November 1936, many foreign journalists had left Madrid for Valencia and the ones that remained lacked 'reliable information' due to 'feverish anxiety' in the capital.¹² Furthermore, according to Paul Preston and Anthony Beevor, the news desks in Britain and America took it for granted that Franco would prevail in Madrid due to the presence of the Army of Africa backed by the Luftwaffe and the Italian air force thus shortening the civil war.¹³ The expectation of Madrid's fall was a 'common illusion', according to Bell which complicated the diplomatic norms of recognizing Franco's regime.¹⁴ The *Independent's* confidence in Madrid's capture was not an isolated case in terms of European newspapers. In order to beat it rivals to the story some French journals even went so far as to claim Madrid's defeat.¹⁵

¹¹ NAI, No. 381 DFA 227/87.

¹² Paul, *We Saw Spain Die*, p. 33.

¹³ Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), p. 494.

¹⁴ Bell Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *Studia Hibernica*, No. 9 (1969): 137-63, p. 152.

¹⁵ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, p. 592.

The *Independent's* coverage continued on 7 November with a headline 'Fight for Madrid – Capital Shelled – Villages captured by Patriots – Fierce Battles'. Madrid was being shelled 'by Patriot artillery'. Furthermore, the article stated that Franco had plans to perform a 'clean sweep' of the public authorities once the city had fallen to his forces.¹⁶ The reportage on 9 November demonstrated the extent of sub editing in the *Times* and the *Independent*.¹⁷ Both papers purported to report the situation on the ground and both utilised Allwork. Both headlines formulate opposing views on the progress on the Madrid front. The *Times'* headline 'Insurgents Held – Desperate Resistance by Madrid Militiamen – Defenders Claim to Have Gained Ground' was in stark contrast to the *Independent's* headline 'Reds Making Last Desperate Stand – Furious Battle for Madrid – Patriots' Final Victory Expected Soon'. Clearly, the fighting was fierce on both sides, yet each paper suggests that the Nationalists and Republicans had gained ground. Both cannot be true and originate from the same press release. The sub-editing and headlines clearly played an important role in the formulation of the news articles and their effect on the Irish public and allowed editors 'to present a particular spin on the story'¹⁸. The papers used the agency report extensively and the third paragraph in the *Times* and the second paragraph in the second demonstrates how each paper utilised the report:

Every device of modern warfare – six-inch artillery, aeroplanes, tanks, flame-throwers and the latest type of "whippet" tanks-was used by the insurgents to try and break the militiamen's stand, but in vain.¹⁹

The *Independent* adopted a different tone:

¹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 7 November 1936.

¹⁷ McGarry noted the editing of press agency reports earlier in the civil war. See McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War'.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁹ *Irish Times*, 7 November 1936.

The Patriot forces are on the outskirts of the city, not more than four miles from its centre, and are vigorously attacking with all the implements of modern warfare.²⁰

The *Times* stressed the defiance of the government forces whereas the *Independent* continued to stress that the 'Patriot' forces were inside the city and expected victory soon. The *Times*' attitude towards the civil war has been described as one of the most objective in Europe.²¹ In the *Times*' first editorial on the siege of Madrid on 10 November its tone was sombre and reflective and argued that although the resistance was courageous, the city was 'doomed':

Although Madrid has not yet fallen there seems to be little doubt that the Spanish capital's doom is sealed. For several days now fighting has been in progress in the suburbs. Only one road – that which leads to Valencia – remains open, and even that way of escaping is being threatened by General Franco's troops

The editorial concluded:

Men and women of good-will throughout the world only can hope and pray that a great people's agony may be brought to an end as soon as possible, and that the victor, in starting his mighty task of rebuilding, may bring true peace to a tortured land.²²

No such sentiment appeared in the *Independent*. The *Times* was clearly appealing for the loss of life to be stemmed in the 'pitiless strife' with an appeal to the victor to bring peace to Spain. The editorial was not overtly pro-Republican but stressed the agony of the Spanish people to its readers.

The two principal newspapers in Derry, like the *Times* and the *Independent* in Dublin, reported the attack on Madrid in two different ways.

²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 7 November 1936.

²¹ Bowyer Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *Studia Hibernica* No. 9 (1969): 137–63, p. 140.

²² *Irish Times*, 10 November 1936.

The *Sentinel*, a Unionist newspaper in the predominantly Catholic city, just a few yards down Shipquay Street from the *Journal*'s office, reported the civil war in much the same fashion as the *Irish Times*. Franco's forces were reported as insurgents and Republican forces were reported as the legitimate Spanish government.²³ Where the *Sentinel* differed from the *Times* was in its adherence to the British government's line throughout the civil war, namely that non-intervention by external powers was the most effective way to contain the escalating civil war.

The *Sentinel* reported the battle for Madrid from a British standpoint and one that was at odds with its rival newspaper in the city. However, a key distinction between the *Sentinel* and the *Journal* lay in the descriptions of the Nationalist forces, and the terms used for the Republican government in Madrid and Franco's insurgency. Furthermore, the *Sentinel* published sub-topics which did not appear in the *Derry Journal*. The reportage employed by the *Sentinel* suggested a backing of the Republican government from a firmly pro-British and therefore pro non-intervention stand-point because 'wise men agree that, in the interests of peace in Europe, the Powers should all leave Spain severely alone'.²⁴

The *Derry Journal* was ideologically akin in its attitude to the civil war to the *Irish Independent*. The *Journal* was passionate from the outset for Franco's insurgency and the battle for Madrid was no exception. Like the *Irish Independent*, the *Derry Journal* published photographs of the civil war from the outset. For the *Journal*, the Civil war represented the forces of Catholicism

²³ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 10 September 1936.

²⁴ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 10 September 1936.

aligned against the 'Red' enemy in Madrid and Moscow. The *Journal* reported on 6 November with a headline 'In Madrid To-Day – Final Bombardment Begins'. The *Journal* did not have any correspondents on the ground in Madrid, as one would expect from a provincial paper in Northern Ireland and relied on the work of Reuters. Unlike the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*, the *Journal* did not name the journalist who had written the report:

The Reds abandoned their defence works as soon as the Insurgents advanced on Alcorcon and Villaviciosa, and turning tail ran back to Madrid
They are now erecting their defences in the capital itself, the centre of which is reported to be in flames.²⁵

To 'turn tail' and return to Madrid carried negative connotations towards the Spanish government forces. The sentence suggests that cowardly Republican forces scurried back towards Madrid. There is also a detrimental tone in the editorial decision to describe the Republican forces as 'Reds'. The same editing tactic was used by the *Irish Independent*. Interestingly, where the *Journal* differed from the *Independent* was, in news agency reports at least, Franco's forces were referred to as 'insurgents', suggesting that no editing had taken place with the agency report in the *Journal's* reportage.

By 9 November the headline was 'Reds Last Stand in Madrid' and was accompanied by an image that depicted the 'Red' forces evacuating a village. The sub-heading was 'Desperate Street Fighting – Battle Raging Since Saturday – Flight of Communist "Government"'. Placing the word 'government' in quotation marks symbolised the *Journal's* attitude. Arguably, the lead paragraph heightened readers' expectations of an imminent Franco victory:

²⁵ *Derry Journal*, 6 November 1936.

The Insurgents, after a thirty-six hours' bombardment and a dashing onslaught before which the Red outer defences broke, down, entered Madrid on Saturday.²⁶

Note the inclusion of the phrase 'dashing onslaught' in the description. 'Dashing' is not an adjective usually applied to the kind of terror wreaked by German and Italian bombers. Beevor has argued that since the capacity of a bomber had increased by the Second World War, the effect on Madrid's population was considerable and significant.²⁷ The sub-headings on 9 November had an air of triumphalism and exuded an air of confidence that a Franco victory was near. 'Red Militia Swept Away', 'Barricades of Death Stormed', 'Insurgents' Irresistible Onrush', 'Anarchists in wild Confusion', 'Defenders' Lack of Morale'. Moreover, the *Journal* reported events that were not reported in other newspapers:

There was fierce fighting in the streets all Saturday night and yesterday. The Reds are putting up a desperate resistance. They are using every device to stay the advance of the Insurgents to the centre of the City, and one message says that from fortified houses they are pouring oil followed by flaming torches on Franco's men.²⁸

One cannot discount these claims out of hand, but the only recorded incident of a house being burned was carried out by Nationalist forces, who had attacked and surrounded a house that contained members of the International Brigades on 20 November.²⁹ The *Derry Journal's* first and only editorial during this period on the battle for Madrid was published on 9 November and reiterated the need to wipe out the 'Reds' and hail a Franco victory and 'cherish the Christian order':

²⁶ *Derry Journal*, 9 November 1936.

²⁷ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, p. 182.

²⁸ *Derry Journal*, 9 November 1936.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.182.

WITH the entry of the Insurgent forces into Madrid, following the abject 'flit' of the precious "Government," including, it is believed, the do or die Caballero, to safer lodgings, the Spanish conflict is approaching the decisive phase. Few hearts throughout the world that cherish the Christian order and loathe the works and pomps of Moscow but will have quickened at the tidings.

The language suggested the Republican government in Madrid as being swept aside easily by Franco's forces. The government may not have been gaining ground – but it was not losing territory due to reinforcements by the Soviet Union. The 'flit', as the *Journal* described it, would not be completely defeated until the spring of 1939:

TRUE, the release of Madrid from the reign of terror and blasphemy will leave no inconsiderable portion of the peninsular still to be wrenched from the sway of anarchy and ruin but the moral, apart from the strategic, importance of possession of the nation's capital is certain to prove a vital factor, the more so since its conquest will have been attended by so grotesque and exhibition of "safety first" tactics on the part of the Caballero Cabinet. With Madrid in their grasp, General Franco and his fellow-leaders will be quartered in the heart of Spain, both in the geographical and in the sentimental sense.

The *Journal* acknowledged that the fall of Madrid would not end the civil war, but added that with Franco in Madrid, he would be 'in the heart of Spain'. Despite the capture in October of Toledo, the spiritual capital of the country and home to the Spain's most important Catholic diocese, by a siege that had lasted since August, Madrid was perceived to be where real power presided. The need to capture Madrid could not be escaped. Any news that deviated from Franco's 'crusade' could arguably harm the Nationalists' image. The piece employed a quote from a Spanish historian to reinforce the importance of Madrid to Franco's insurgency under a 'united', Catholic Spain:

FOR so it was, the Spanish historian of the last century, Pelayo, once declared, with an almost prophetic significance, "A Spaniard who ceases to be Catholic is incapable of believing in anything, unless it be in the omnipotence of a general practical sense which generally is

coarse, egoistic, and gross.” In the result of the progress from Burgos to Madrid there is, therefore, not merely a great moral and strategic accomplishment but a symbolic linking of the supreme religious and political aspirations of the true Spain, which is a Spain strong and united from the core outwards, and, supremely, a Catholic Spain.

The end of the editorial was reserved for ire towards the supporters of the Republican government and arguing that they were all puppets of Moscow and had been ‘dupes’ for supporting the Government:

IN the inglorious spectacle, on the other hand, of the scampering desperates who posed as a “Government,” but who were in reality a hidebound department of the Moscow International, under the leadership of the Soviet Ambassador in Madrid, their pitiful dupes may well be told now, “these be your gods!”³⁰

In one respect the article was correct, the Soviet involvement had increased considerably – however, the Soviet Union was the only member of the international community who would support the Spanish government. Franco was backed by the Germany, Italy and Portugal. The editorial was also correct to state that the Republican government had fled to Valencia on 6 November.

The *Irish News* first reported the battle of Madrid on 6 November and devoted an editorial to it. The editorial focused on the remarks of Rev. Precentor E.H. Lewis-Crosby, B.D. at the Church of Ireland joint Synods of Dublin, Glendalough and Kildare. The Reverend argued that the reason the Catholic Church had been attacked in Spain lay with the Church’s ‘hand in glove’ affiliation to the ruling elite:

It is because, unfortunately and unmistakably, so many of the Church leaders in Spain have gone hand in glove with those who have oppressed the peasant classes and others by denying them really the means of living by the way they were treating them.

The editorial concluded:

³⁰ *Derry Journal*, 9 November 1936.

There is a vast difference between pious expressions of tolerance and groundless allegations against a great Catholic nation in its agony - as vast a difference, we should say, as exists between the advancement of the Kingdom of God and the advancement of Uriah Heep.³¹

The inclusion of Uriah Heep, Charles Dickens' contemptible character in *David Copperfield*, exemplifies the sectarian nature of the newspaper industry in Belfast. The inclusion, one could argue, was not without careful consideration. The editorial was comparing the Church of Ireland hierarchy to a duplicitous, devious character of the nineteenth-century literature and one motivated by greed and selfishness.

On 7 November, the *Irish News* published accounts of the fighting on the outskirts of Madrid. The *Irish News* routinely referred to the protagonists as the 'Government' and the 'Insurgents'. Under the headline, 'Fighting in Madrid Suburbs – Nationalist Forces Within Five Miles – Hourly Air-Raid on Capital – Frantic Communist Appeal to Arms', the article detailed the position of the Nationalist troops:

General Varela's troops fought a fierce battle throughout yesterday afternoon in the suburbs of Madrid, according to the insurgent headquarters. A Communique issued last night by the Air Ministry in Madrid states that five insurgent planes were brought down near Madrid by Government machines.

The inclusion of the report from Nationalist forces is interesting as only the *Irish Independent* published similar accounts – presumably from the same source, a cablegram wired to Lisbon from a Reuters' correspondent.

³¹ *Irish News*, 6 November 1936.

On 9 November, the *Irish News* published its second editorial on the civil war – and one that made its position clear, that the defence of Madrid was futile and the forces of Franco must prevail:

Though reports of the fall of Madrid have been premature, the occupation of the city by the Nationalist forces may be expected at any hour. If, as is probable, the defences of the city crumple like paper, we must remember that most of its defences were made of paper.

Less than three months have elapsed since hostilities began, and to-day the Nationalists have Madrid at their Mercy. Powerful as their armies are and skilled as are the generals, it is obvious that their greatest strength lies in the goodwill of the people, who have joined wholeheartedly in the war of liberation.

It was ironic that the editorial argued that the strength of the generals was a result of the 'goodwill of the people', as one of the reasons the Nationalists were not celebrating their victory over Madrid and the Republic was, in part, due to resistance by the citizens of Madrid. The conclusion illustrated the importance of Madrid to the perceived legitimacy of the cause:

Perhaps the men and women in other countries who were foolishly misled by the gangsters of Madrid will set at their true value those who wanted to undertake the responsibility of rulers but fear to face responsibility now for the ruin and devilry they have brought about.³²

The inclusion of the volunteers from abroad was the first clear reference in the *Irish News* to the emergence of the International Brigades who were arriving in Madrid in significant numbers by November 1937. The editorial reads like a sermon – pouring scorn on those who did not believe in Franco's cause.

The *Irish News*, like the *Londonderry Sentinel*, focused on aspects of the battles from sources other than Reuters. On 9 November, the paper reported a news cable from the Portuguese Radio Club (RCP) stating that a storm was holding up Franco's advance and that men from Belfast had been

³² *Irish News*, 9 November 1936.

captured. The radio station was owned by a Nationalist supporter and high-level Portuguese politician in the Estado Novo, Júlio Botelho Moniz. The RCP broadcasted unrelenting pro-Franco support from Portugal. The station was one of the first which could, thanks to its owner's participation in the conflict, broadcast exact locations of troops and exact 'knowledge of the movements'. The *Irish News*' reporting of the conflict may have been influenced by RCP's reporting which employed biased terminology such as 'barbarians', 'reds', 'anti-Nationalists', 'Marxists' and 'Muscovites'.³³ Furthermore, in common with pro-Nationalist publications in Ireland, the RCP portrayed the Republicans as the barbarians of the conflict whereas the Nationalist forces were 'more humane' with a 'strong human component'.³⁴ The station broadcast Fascist songs, pro-Nationalist 'news' with propaganda programmes and details of military manoeuvres, which could have had a strong exhortatory effect on the Nationalists and their cause. Franco's own press officer Luis Bolán stated that the station had 'handed out the truth in large doses to those who tuned in with its wave-length at home, and to countless Spaniards in Spain'.³⁵ The use of radio as a key component of propaganda was only realised during the Spanish Civil War. An example of this occurred during the siege of the Alcazar in Toledo. Pro-Republican radio stations in Madrid and Valencia had broadcast that Toledo had fallen. However, the RCP intercepted a communication from a Communist MP in Madrid to the effect that Toledo had not fallen to the

³³ Ribeiro Nelson, 'Using a New Medium for Propaganda: The Role of Transborder Broadcasts during the Spanish Civil War', *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2012): 37–50. p. 43.

³⁴ Nelson, 'Using a New Medium for Propaganda', p. 43.

³⁵ Luis Bolán, *Spain: The Vital Years* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 164.

Republicans. General Valera rushed troops towards Toledo to bolster Nationalist forces.³⁶

Soviet resupply to the Madrid Government

The Soviet Union, despite being a signatory to the Non-Intervention Treaty, was not, according to Ivan Mikhailovich Maisky, the Russian ambassador in London, going to be beholden to its treaty obligations in the face of flagrant violations by Germany and Italy. At the Non-Intervention Committee on 28 October Maisky stated that Russia 'felt itself no more bound by the agreement than Germany, Italy or Portugal'. The very next day Soviet T-26 tanks participated in an attack on Sesena.³⁷ This flow of arms helped the beleaguered Republican government and arguably stemmed the advance, in Madrid at least, of the Nationalist uprising. Under Soviet direction, the International Brigades arrived in Madrid. By 13 November the XI and XII International Brigades were in place, numbering 3,450 men. The argument has been made that the International Brigades saved Madrid, with the British ambassador reportedly having stated to an American colleague that there were 'no Spaniards in the defending army of Madrid'.³⁸

The *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Irish News* did not acknowledge the Soviet resupply in any detail. Unlike the *Journal* and *Sentinel* in Derry and the *Times* and *Independent* in Dublin, no editorial during our frame of reference, cited the significance of the Soviet resupply. For the *Irish News*, the resupply might have potentially herald a change in the civil war against Franco. The

³⁶ Nelson, 'Using a New Medium for Propaganda', p. 42.

³⁷ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, p. 531.

³⁸ Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 480.

Telegraph barely noted the change on the battlefield. On 14 November, the *Irish News*' editorial lamented the damage and destruction being wrought on Madrid. Despite the assistance of the Soviet Union the *Irish News* reported that 'the position of the Communists in Madrid is hopeless and the capture of the city is only a matter of days or, perhaps, hours'. The *Telegraph* acknowledged the resupply by merely noting 'the sudden acquisition of new fighter aeroplanes, which are faster than anything the insurgents are able to put in the air'.³⁹

The *Irish Times* continued to argue that the civil war was barbaric and cruel and was 'bleeding Spain white' but took a more nuanced view referencing the new Soviet armoury for the Republican forces:

When General Franco reached the suburbs of Madrid everybody outside Spain believed that the capital would be captured in a few days; but a remarkable change came over the morale of the defending forces. Up to that point the Government troops, who are mainly raw levies of militia men, had been fighting with the first weapons that came to their hands – chiefly rifles of an antiquated pattern.

Now all that has been changed. It seems that Russia has taken a hand in the game, and that not only have quantities of modern weapons and munitions been received by the Spanish government, but Russian officers and a certain number of highly-trained men have arrived to stiffen Madrid's defences.⁴⁰

Although many of the journalists had left Madrid, there were some remaining dispatches that heavily influenced the world's reporting of the siege. Interestingly, Hugh Thomas does not reference Allwork as one of the main journalists in Madrid but rather cites Sefton Delmer, Henry Buckley and Vincent Sheean, none of whom reported the likelihood that Madrid would fall. The prediction that Madrid's fall was imminent began to wane after the *Times*

³⁹ See *Irish Times* 14 November 1936 & *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 November 1936.

⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 16 November 1936.

reported that the Republican government could defend itself against Franco's airmen in newer, faster machines:

The first sign of this change was observed when General Franco's airmen, who hitherto had had matters largely to themselves confronted with better and faster machines than their own, which, according to British eye-witnesses, literally "made rings around" the attacking aircraft.

The editorial was correct. The inclusion on the battlefield of Soviet fighter aircraft did enhance Madrid's defences. Nationalist aircraft were no longer able to dominate the skies as they had from early October. However, Allwork interviewed a female English resident of Madrid in early December who said the reports of air-raids were exaggerated by members of the public in Madrid to gain advantage in the ration queue by screaming 'the bombers are coming'. These may have been isolated events, but nevertheless may have influenced the few journalists stationed in Madrid, whose editors were looking for sensational stories.⁴¹

According to Beevor, Soviet military aid purchased with Spanish gold reserves had an impact from late October when the first batch of Katiuska fast bombers raided Seville. On 3 November Chato aircraft were seen in Madrid skies and successfully disrupted Italian Fiat fighters. Moreover, the appearance of fighter planes for the Republic boosted morale, with the streets 'thronged with crowds staring up into the skies and cheering whenever an aircraft was hit; it was always assumed to be an enemy'.⁴² After the Soviet resupply to the ailing Republican forces it was not until 18 November that another *Independent* editorial was published. The Nationalist attack had been

⁴¹ Read, *The Power of News: The History of Reuters*. p. 238. see also; Bolín, *Spain: The Vital Years*, p. 228.

⁴² Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*. p. 174.

stymied by the resupply of the Republican forces by the Soviet Union and the arrival of the International Brigades. By the end of October this had enabled the Republican government to have 80,000 men under arms, the majority of whom were needed for the defence of Madrid.⁴³ The editorial acknowledged, for the first time, the extent of Soviet supplies to the Republican government and the arrival of foreign volunteers but kept up the rhetoric of 'Patriotic' forces delivering a hammer blow to the communist forces. The editorial argued that 'Patriot' forces were being denied the equipment and machinery they needed but that other European powers were allowing the 'anti-Christ' forces to be supplied from Russia.

There was no acknowledgement of the military aid being delivered from Germany and Italy that was cited in the *Irish Times* editorial. The *Times* did not have a monopoly on information it might be argued the *Independent* deliberately did not report the fact that Italy and Germany were supporting Franco with military hardware. Furthermore, the air raids that were becoming a regular feature of the civil war included some involvement of Germany's Condor Legion. Germany and Italy also supplied tanks for the advance. None of these developments are mentioned in the editorial. The *Independent* accused the states adhering to the Non-Intervention Agreement, which included Ireland, of having 'thrown off' their neutral stance:

The third phase is now to be observed. The disguise of neutrality is thrown off. It has become apparent to every observer that the hordes of anti-Christ have been liberally supplied with tanks, aircraft, artillery, and other weapons of war, from Russia and elsewhere.

Even an Irish admirer of the 'Government' of Spain states that those who are now fighting against the Spanish Patriots have modern tanks,

⁴³ Ibid., p. 168.

up-to-date guns and millions of rounds of ammunition, which have 'poured in from outside sources.' It is not difficult to guess the sources.

The acknowledgment of the Soviet resupply was significant – the *Independent* had not published an editorial on the situation in Madrid since 9 November when it had predicted the imminent fall of Madrid. The military situation had changed and the *Independent's* stirring declarations of the 'Patriot' push into Madrid were proved remarkably premature. The editorial concluded with an impassioned paragraph that dismissed the significance of Soviet aid for Spain and argued, as the paper had since the beginning of the civil war, that the 'Patriot' forces would overcome the communist forces aligned against them:

The Spanish Patriots, battling for their Faith and the liberty and honour of their country, are not dismayed by the international combination of Anarchists, Communists and Atheists who are endeavouring to stay their progress. It is now only a matter of a very brief period until the Crucifix will replace the Sickle and Hammer over the City of Madrid.⁴⁴

The reporting of the battle for Madrid in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* came via news agency reports the editing of which was contrived to back Franco, in the *Independent's* case, and the Republican Government, in that of the *Times*. The *Independent's* passionate reporting of Franco could be contrasted to the equally impassioned but more compassionate *Times*. There were no accounts of the German and Italian war supplies to Franco, which appeared in the *Times*. There was none of the compassion or calling for calm that appeared in the *Times*.

An editorial on 12 November in the *Sentinel* presented a different case from the *Journal* on 9 November over the Soviet resupply. The *Sentinel* did agree with points that the *Journal* raised in its piece on the threat posed by the

⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, 18 November 1936.

'international Moscow' without passing comment on the *Journal's* reporting of Catholicism and Spain. The editorial lambasted the Soviet Union's interference but stayed silent on the actions of Germany and Italy which had been reported in the *Times* during this period. The *Sentinel* argued that Britain would not allow the growth of communism in Europe. The final sentence suggested the British government would not allow anything to 'affect the nation's interest'. The exact reasoning behind this confidence was not made clear to the reader but it may have been an indication of the geopolitics in Europe at the time:

It is not surprising that as the ghastly tragedy in Spain approaches its climax the international Communists, whose part in the whole affair becomes increasingly evident, should be disposed to make desperate efforts to save the situation. At the outset of hostilities Great Britain and France took an initiative which saved Europe from a very serious peril to her peace. Although it is clear that in some cases, and outstandingly in the case of Soviet Russia, the non-intervention agreement has been more honoured in the breach than in the observance, there can be no reasonable doubt that the situation has been much less tragic than it would have been if there had been a general and open intervention.

The editorial proceeded to warn of the dangers that the Soviet Union posed to Europe, and notes with confidence that Britain would maintain its national interest:

Soon after the war Lenin and Trotsky proclaimed the object of securing 'Europe red at both ends.' With Russia and Spain Communist, it was pointed out, Europe could be held between a pair of pincers. Soviet activity has been directed unceasingly to the achievement of this object. Whatever else may be said about the future of Spain this unpleasant dream, at any rate, will not come true. There need be no fear that the British government will not be alive to anything in future developments that may affect the nation's interests.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 12 November 1936.

Surprisingly, the *Journal* reported on the delivery of new Soviet aircraft which were superior to those of the 'anti-Red' forces:

They are faster than anything the anti-Reds can put in the air and during yesterday's battles over Madrid they made circles around the Nationalist machines.⁴⁶

An adjoining article continued in the same fashion, stating that the Reuters correspondent thought that a 'most remarkable feature' of the Madrid fighting was the superior new machines the 'Madrid Reds' had obtained.

A dearth of dispatches from the front

By 13 November the *Journal* acknowledged the lack of information emanating from Spain. With a headline 'Madrid Must Be Taken' and a sub-heading 'Should it Mean Reducing Stone by Stone' were direct quotes from an interview with an unnamed Reuter's journalist. The only news, according to the *Journal*, was 'meagre'. Franco had declared that Madrid must be taken regardless of the 'Reds' refusal to 'yield or surrender' to Nationalist forces. Franco was also reported in the *Times* stating that 'I will destroy Madrid rather than leave it to the Marxists'. However, Madrid was not reduced to rubble, despite significant damage. Writing in 1967, Luis Bolíns, Franco's press secretary, wrote that journalists at the time overstated the destruction that befell Madrid:

The damage caused inside it by shells or bombs falling wide of their mark was used as copy by writers of international repute, eager to thrill their editors and readers with visions of danger and destruction, but Madrid itself suffered less in the course of its thirty months' siege than many Allied or German towns in a single night of terror during the Second World War.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Derry Journal*, 16 November 1936.

⁴⁷ Bolín, *Spain: The Vital Years*, p. 228.

Yet the news would not to be considered 'meagre' by the time of the next edition of the *Journal*, as the largest dogfight of the civil war commenced on 13 November and continued up to 16 November. There were 14 Fiats and 13 Chatos locked in combat over the Paseo de Rosales. According to Beevor by the 16 November the Prado, the Museo Antropológico, the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, the Biblioteca Nacional, the Museo de Arte Moderno, the Museo Arqueológico and the Archivo Histórico Nacional, as well as three hospitals had been hit.⁴⁸ The *Journal's* reportage of the aerial battles did reflect the intensity of the raids with a headlines such as 'Week-End of Terror From Skies', 'Continuous Bombardment of Madrid', 'Insurgent Successes':

Twenty-two Insurgent aeroplanes raided the Capital yesterday morning and the Red authorities in the city say that seventeen persons were killed and over a hundred wounded...According to Reuter's Madrid correspondent, Red fighters in their new fast Russian planes went up and drove the raiding squadron off.⁴⁹

The information contained in the lead paragraphs and the tone they employ to convey it is of vital importance because of their potential effect on Irish public opinion. The paragraphs acknowledged the changing battlefield arrangements for the first time, even though the reinforcements had begun in late October.

The *Sentinel* reported the battle for Madrid from a British standpoint. Unlike the *Journal*, there was no talk of the danger to the unity of Spain, but instead the *Sentinel* used the term 'Loyalists' to describe to Republicans. The

⁴⁸ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, p. 181.

⁴⁹ *Derry Journal*, 16 November 1936.

term 'loyalist' was commonly used by the press or the Republican government but not by the *Journal* or the *Independent*.

The first day that the extent of the bombing of Madrid was commonly known came on 7 November. The Nationalist fire-power directed at Madrid was reported with the headline:

Madrid's Day of Terror – Unparalleled in Modern History – Streets Littered with Dead – Women Join in Fighting – Thousands Killed in Desperate Battle

The fact it reported that women were participating in the fighting put the paper's coverage at odds with the other publications analysed for this chapter.

The lead paragraph was even more revealing in its tone and its language:

Shaken by terrific artillery bombardments, raided continually by insurgent aircraft, with the streets of its outer suburbs littered with dead, and with women amazons joining their menfolk and fighting like demons, Madrid passed through a day of terror unparalleled in the history of any great modern city.⁵⁰

The language in its reportage is intriguing, as the inclusion of the term 'amazons', the mythical female warriors present in ancient Greek mythology, fighting on behalf of the Republic, conjures up images of heroic and strong female fighters. The lead paragraph preceded a Reuter's agency report by J.R. Allwork, the same journalist who had been published in the *Times*, *Independent* and *Derry Journal*. The fact other publications did not print the report from Allwork suggests that reporting that women were on the frontline was not appealing to other publications. The image of martyr-like women taking part in the conflict suggests a unified Republican response to the fighting and might arguably undermine the image of barbarity that was being attributed to the Republican cause.

⁵⁰ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 7 November 1936.

The reportage on 14 November focused on the Madrid Government's repulsion of Franco's forces with a dramatic headline 'Big Counter Attack – By Government Militia. – 50,000 Men Hurlled Against Insurgents'. The government troops halted Franco's advance. The *Sentinel* argued the 'loyalist' troops were holding their ground and in parts advancing out of Madrid:

Fifty thousand Government militia yesterday were hurlled against the insurgents in the first big counter-offensive since the Madrid siege began
Government aircraft patrolled the skies, and Loyalist batteries in the suburbs ceased fire so as not to hit their advancing troops.⁵¹

The *Sentinel* and the *Journal's* accounts cannot both be correct, but they underline the formulation of a narrative that demonstrates either Franco advancing to take Madrid or heroic Madrid residents and the Republican government repelling Nationalist attack. The *Journal*, along with other pro-Nationalist publications in Ireland and abroad, expected a victory for Franco in November 1936 and an end to the 'bullfight' – the name German diplomats cynically applied to the battle for Madrid.⁵² Furthermore, when the siege was halted the *Journal* argued that the news was unclear from the front. Conversely, when the Madrid siege had turned into a stalemate, the *Sentinel* proclaimed the heroics of the Madrid forces and stated how high the morale was in the capital. The *Sentinel* also printed stories that did not appear in *Journal*:

Asturian miners, fighting for the Government, are doing terrible damage with grenades and dynamite, which they throw under tank wheels. New war material from abroad has contributed to the improved morale in Madrid.⁵³

⁵¹ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 14 November 1936.

⁵² Chargé d' affaires in Madrid, v. Tippleskirch to Foreign Ministry, 23 September 1936, DGFP, p. 94. *Quoted in* Ibid., p. 189.

⁵³ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 14 November 1936.

Asturian miners and their heroics did not make it into the *Journal's* reportage. Both the *Journal* and the *Sentinel* were intent on framing the war for its readership. The *Sentinel* claimed on 14 November that Franco's forces had threatened to carry out gas attacks and that, if Republican forces were attacked, the 'Government' troops would also resort to gas attacks. Arguably, the *Sentinel* published these accounts to discredit the Nationalist crusade and its rival in the city. The article was small but highlighted the intensity of the battles raging around Madrid:

Gas warfare is the latest horror threatened in Spain's civil war, which enters its 119th day to-day.

The insurgents apparently already have the possibility of its use against Madrid in mind, for a message received in Lisbon yesterday quotes insurgent officers as saying that the Government troops are already using gas bombs, and that as a result "we may be forced to use gas as well."

A Madrid message says – It can be categorically denied, Reuter was told, that the Madrid Government is using gas against the insurgents.⁵⁴

The use of chemical weapons in the Spanish theatre of war was never proven but both sides routinely accused each other of deploying the weapons. This may in part explain the prominence of the *Sentinel's* article. However, the increased militarisation of the conflict by the Soviet Union and Germany arguably heightened the threat posed by such weapons in Spain.

The last day of the coverage within this chapter's frame of reference saw the battle for Madrid being reported but with an increase in heroic defence and morale boosting counter-measures to thwart Franco's men:

The attack made yesterday by 1,500 Moroccans and troops of the Foreign Legion, supported by nineteen tanks, in an endeavour to cross the Manzanares at the Bridge of the French, was the most violent and bloody of any yet launched.

⁵⁴ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 14 November 1936.

It was terrific. The militiamen put up great resistance and actually made a number of counter-attacks through the olive trees that are left standing in the Casa del Campo.⁵⁵

The *Irish News* published its last editorial on the battle for Madrid on Spain on 14 November, and evoked lessons from a previous civil war in Britain.

Arguably the *Irish News* may have felt the battle was lost:

It is essential for the victory of the Spanish Nationalists that Madrid should be taken; but it is a tragedy that the thousand-year-old capital should be pounded into dust in a war between men of the same race. For that tragedy the fugitive 'Government' must take the responsibility. Into it the Communistic philosophy has been interwoven with a cowardice that finds expression in the lines:

'Those that fly may fight again,
Which he can never do that's slain.'⁵⁶

The quote used was intriguing as it came from a series of satirical poems called *Hudibras* by Samuel Butler published in 1678.⁵⁷ Butler argued that militant Puritanism during the English Civil War was pretentious, pedantic, hypocritical and fantasist. The motive behind the editorial can only be speculated, but one could suggest the editor was arguing that the defence of Madrid was futile. The editorial concluded:

Despite the assistance of Russian officers, the position of the Communists in Madrid is hopeless and the capture of the city is only a matter of days or, perhaps, hours. The credit that normally should go to brave defenders must be withheld from the Red militiamen who are prolonging the fight, not in the hope of triumph, but to strike a last shattering blow at a devastated country by the destruction of a once famous capital.⁵⁸

By the 16 November the *Irish News* had reported Nationalist successes in the battle for Madrid. The Manzanares river had been crossed by Franco's forces

⁵⁵ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 November 1936.

⁵⁶ *Irish News*, 14 November 1936.

⁵⁷ "Hudibras" *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hudibras-poem-by-Butler/> (Accessed 2/10/2016)

⁵⁸ *Irish News*, 14 November 1936.

and the capital's defences were deemed to be crumbling. With a headline 'The Manzanares Crossed! – The Enemy's Resistance is Now Overcome', the lead paragraph of the article gave the impression that the Nationalist troops, after days of setbacks, were on the offensive:

Attacked to the right of Getafe yesterday, the insurgent regulars counter-attacked and were said to have taught the loyalists a severe lesson. The Government losses were heavy, and the survivors of the column fled to Madrid pursued by aeroplanes. Radio Seville added: "In the course of our attack on the enemy positions near the Toledo bridge, our tanks ravaged the enemy ranks. General Miaja attempted to attack our new positions near the Princess Segovia and Toledo bridges, but the onslaught was checked by artillery fire."⁵⁹

The editorial was correct in one respect. Despite the reinforcements by the Soviet Union, the Insurgents had steadily increased their use of aeroplanes to uproot the heavily dug-in Republican forces. The 'haemorrhaging' of key units of the insurgency due to vicious street-fighting resulted in the conclusion that the use of aeroplanes might reduce losses. Between 15-23 November there were unprecedented air-raids across the Manzanares river and the wide-open spaces of the University City.⁶⁰ To reinforce the Nationalist-orientated coverage, the lead paragraph of the editorial concluded with a morale-boosting message regarding casualties, arguing that 'these attacks are adding greatly to the Government's losses'.⁶¹ The source, Radio Seville, had aired pro-Franco communiques from the outset of the conflict. In July 1936, the station was captured by Gonzalo Queipo de Llano y Sierra, a Brigadier General and a key instigator of the insurgency.

⁵⁹ *Irish News*, 16 November 1936.

⁶⁰ Stradling, *Your Children Will Be Next - Bombing and Propaganda in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39*, p. 55.

⁶¹ *Irish News*, 16 November 1936.

Following the heavy aerial bombardment and street fighting in the Madrid suburbs, the *Irish News* published a cable from J.R. Allwork. His dispatches continued to report the bombardment of Madrid and it was clear that the defences were holding for the Madrid Government. The dramatic 'death-dealing raids' signified the fire power available to the Nationalists and reinforced the need to capture Madrid. The last editorial by the *Irish News* was published on 19 November and contained a warning. The war was lost for the government and 'although weeks may elapse before the fight is finished' only Germany and Italy had recognised Franco's regime. The editorial did not demand that Ireland and the UK recognise Franco's regime, but warned that Soviet interference, turning 'Madrid into the Moscow' of Europe was bound to fail from the outset. The editorial warned that the Soviet Union would turn elsewhere for its mischief-making:

Since the two Great Powers of Central Europe have bestowed their blessing on the new regime in Spain, it is to be expected that smaller States, like Portugal, Austria and Belgium, will speedily follow suit. The material support given by the Soviet to the Spanish Reds has been given in vain. The costly experiment of converting Madrid into the Moscow of Western Europe has been so dismal a failure that Stalin's legions will be obliged to turn elsewhere for their mischief making.⁶²

The *Belfast Telegraph* published fewer articles during the research period than the *Irish News*. Unlike the bi-weekly *Londonderry Sentinel*, which solidly backed the British government's non-interventionist stance, the Unionist *Telegraph* was not as forthright in its reportage and its one editorial during the siege of Madrid cautioned both sides against further violence. The *Telegraph*, like its Catholic counterpart in Belfast, employed quotations from literature to reinforce its point. The poem was from the *Anti-Jacobin* about the death of

⁶² *Irish News*, 19 November 1936.

Jean Bon St. Andre, from a 1797 publication that aimed to thwart revolutionary thoughts and feelings in Britain following the French Revolution:

He was a gallant captain,
In battles much delighting.
He fled full soon
On the First of June,
But he bade the rest keep fighting

The poem argued that leaders may flee to safety, but their soldiers will stay and perish. Jean Bon St. Andre was a French Protestant Minister, who was wounded at the battle of the First of June and withdrew for treatment. The editorial was not overtly supportive of the Republican government, but its tone was sombre and urged a degree of caution to the victors in the ‘melancholy spectacle of one of Europe’s greatest capital cities exposed to a rain of shells from heavy artillery and of bombs from aeroplane, while the ring of investments is ever contracting’. Madrid was expected to fall to Franco in the autumn of 1936. Underpinning that prediction was Franco’s statement on 30 October which called for an large-scale aerial assault on enemy airfields. Scholars have argued that a ‘terror campaign’ was unleashed on the same day as the statement to break the morale of the Madrid people.⁶³ The editorial conceded that government forces had fought ‘gallantly’ but were no match for an ‘admirably equipped enemy’:

Lofty buildings are sinking down into crashing ruin under a hail of death, while on the outskirts of the city the defenders, contesting the ground foot by foot, are being driven back steadily by irresistible pressure. Whatever the result of the Spanish Civil War may be, it has demonstrated the impotence of undisciplined and untrained forces, however gallantly they may fight, in the face of a highly-organised enemy efficient and admirably equipped.

⁶³ Stradling, *Your Children Will Be Next*, p. 51.

The piece concluded with a warning for the potential victor that they should be magnanimous to their enemy, citing religion as a predominant reason for their magnanimity:

If they are true patriots and champions of religion they will be expected to exhibit the qualities attached to the part, and to behave with magnanimity to the conquered enemy, as well as restraining their soldiers, Moorish and Spanish, from atrocities towards the civilian population.⁶⁴

Like its Unionist counterpart in Derry, the *Sentinel*, the *Telegraph* only published one editorial during the period in question. Unlike the *Sentinel*, there was no mention of UK's role in the Non-Intervention agreement. Instead the editorial was conciliatory in tone and message. The reportage in the *Telegraph* was remarkably similar to the *Sentinel*. The *Telegraph* cited Christopher Holmes from Reuters (who would later become entangled in the bombing of Guernica) who reported that women were fighting on behalf of the communists. A small article headlined 'Women fight like Demons' stated that an insurgent officer had informed Holmes that 'a battalion of Communist women were fighting like demons in the park and had sustained terrible losses'.⁶⁵ In a letter to a friend in December 1936 Holmes states he only witnessed 'white' [Nationalist] atrocities, 'I am rather handicapped by my disgust at the selfishness and public irresponsibility of the white generals and their cold-blooded massacres of working men, women and children'.⁶⁶ The inclusion of Holmes' article is intriguing as the *Sentinel* had already published a remarkably similar piece on 7 November. The two articles were from

⁶⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, 3 November 1936.

⁶⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 November 1936.

⁶⁶ Read, *The Power of News: The History of Reuters*, p. 238.

separate sources, *Reuters* and the *Press Association* and both depicted heroic strong women resisting the Nationalists in Madrid.

The similarities between the *Telegraph* and the *Sentinel* continued. On 13 November, with a top headline 'Gas Warfare Coming', the *Telegraph* reported the threatened use of gas by insurgent forces, a theme that did not appear in the *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times* or *Irish Press*. The lead paragraph was the same in both the *Sentinel* and *Telegraph*, without editing. The difference occurred in the prominence given to the story. The *Telegraph* used the gas attacks for its headline, whereas the *Sentinel* placed the story in one of its numerous subheadings.

Conclusion

The ideological battle between newspapers throughout the siege was framed by editorials and press reports that were sourced from a small pool of journalists on the ground in Madrid. The editing and emphasis in newspapers was influenced by news agency reports, the majority of them from Reuter's J.R. Allwork. Yet, Allwork's articles alone cannot account for the coverage in the six papers. The topics emphasised, the lead paragraphs and the sources of news all allowed the newspapers to construct a narrative for their readers. In terms of the ideological differences between the newspapers, the reportage demonstrated similarities. The pro-Franco press, the *Irish News*, the *Derry Journal* and the *Irish Independent* reported the siege of Madrid with the utmost optimism that Madrid would fall quickly. Their expectations were shared by officials in European capitals and in the Irish government itself.

Across the ideological split amongst Irish newspapers, both pro-Franco and pro-Madrid, the *Irish Times*, the *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Londonderry Sentinel*, reported the siege with a measure of suspicion of Franco's methods and tactics and offered some backing, albeit reluctantly in the case of the *Belfast Telegraph*, for the Government in Madrid. A key difference in the reportage between Catholic-orientated press and the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Londonderry Sentinel* was the subject matter that was reported. The *Telegraph* and the *Sentinel* both published accounts of female fighters in terms of martyrdom. Furthermore, the same publications published accounts that suggested gas may have been used by Franco's forces. One could argue that the inclusion of gas as a subject matter to discredit Franco's insurgency, since chemical warfare had last taken place eighteen years earlier during WW1. Secondly, the reporting of women fighters for the Republic may have been included to suggest desperation on the part of the Republic. In the frame of reference for this chapter, there was only one paragraph in an article that might be deemed sectarian in nature. The *Irish News* compared the Church of Ireland to a devious and duplicitous character from a Charles Dickens novel.

All the newspapers' editorials were based on scant information. The *Belfast Telegraph* contextualised the siege in historical terms by using a poem, as well as criticising the Republican government's move to Valencia. On the other hand, the *Derry Journal* made reference to historical characters in its editorials to justify its stance on the civil war. The editing of press agency reports by the newspapers in order to frame a narrative for their readers played an important role in the formulation of public opinion in Ireland. Often, accounts published conflicted with each other, as, for example, in the *Irish Independent*

and the *Irish Times*. Conflicts over facts occurred in the reporting of ground gained, enemy soldiers killed and the extent of air-raids taking place above Madrid. Contemporary accounts of the siege have shown that news reports from Madrid rarely recorded the correct details of air encounters. Allwork's interview with an English resident of Madrid underpins the assertion that air-raids may have been exaggerated and details were often reported second hand.

The reporting of the siege of Madrid laid bare the competing ideologies in Ireland. The debates in the columns and articles of the newspapers reflected the warring factions in Spain and created a situation where newspapers which were published on the same day often had conflicting information on the progress of a battle. The narrative promoted the virtues of Franco's insurgency on the one hand, or the solid defence of Madrid on the other. These narratives would continue to dominate the reporting of the civil war until Madrid's final surrender in April 1939.

Chapter Two

‘Hypothetical bombing of a small town’¹ – Fact and Fiction in Irish

Newspapers

The attack on Guernica on 26 April 1937 by the German Condor Legion was the first large-scale air raid in human history. Guernica was not on the frontline in the civil war. Estimates vary, but it is possible that 250 to 1,600 civilians may have been killed in a town that was not a legitimate military target (although this is disputed).² The historiography of the attack is extensive, but there is a dearth of academic research on how the attack was reported in Ireland. Current research offers little more than a cursory glance of the reportage of such an important juncture in the Spanish Civil War.

This chapter attempts to address the academic deficit in the attack’s reportage and delineate the breadth and depth of the coverage in Irish newspapers. The chapter analyses the coverage in national and rural-based newspapers and newspapers from Northern Ireland as well as religious publications. The chapter will argue that the coverage was far more varied and diverse than the current literature suggests. The chapter will build upon McGarry’s comprehensive and detailed research paper, ‘Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War’ and Robert Stradling’s seminal work, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*, neither of which deal with the attack on Guernica in great depth.³ The attack was virtually ignored by some rural newspapers because the attack could have harmed support for Franco’s

¹ *Irish Independent*, 4 May 1937.

² Fearghal McGarry, ‘Irish newspapers and the Spanish Civil War’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 33, no. 129 (2002): 68–90, p. 77.

³ Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*. & McGarry, ‘Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War’.

insurgency among a conservative rural populace, but heavily reported in editorials and reports in national and urban newspapers.

The furore that Guernica ignited was arguably unprecedented in modern warfare in 1937. The Basque town had no military significance although there was a munitions factory outside the town that was not damaged. The events that took place on 26 April 1937 were reported by George Steer, *The Times* correspondent during the Civil War. His initial reporting of the attack helped ignite a debate regarding the morality of war and mass aerial bombardment. According to Preston, Steer's article 'provoked more savage polemic than any single act of war' and 'much of that polemic has revolved around Steer's article'.⁴ Although reports of the attack were originally published worldwide, Franco's press machine muddled the waters and blamed the attack on the retreating 'Reds', claiming they had set fire to the town.

The *Irish Times*' coverage of Guernica was markedly different to that of other national papers. The initial report of the attack came on 28 April 1937 under the headline 'Destruction of Guernica – President Accuses German Airmen', and accurately described what occurred in Guernica. The report was by Christopher Holme, of Reuters.⁵ Holmes along with Noel Monks of the *Daily Express* and Steer were in Bilbao when word was received about the attack. Holmes along with Monks and Steer are credited with producing accurate

⁴ Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2008), p. 505.

⁵ Although the newspapers state 'Press Association Foreign Special' as was the case with the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and *Cork Examiner* – it is essentially a 'rewrite of Reuters news'. See Southworth Rutledge Herbert, *Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1977), p. 403. ft. 20.

reports that allowed the truth to surface in the aftermath of the bombing, and of a relentless counter-press campaign by Luis Bolín, Franco's press chief.⁶

The *Irish Times* published the initial Irish report on Guernica and, like its counterparts in the *Irish Independent*, immediately received letters to the editor that praised the attack, the first of which was published on 29 April. The letter by G.W. Keegan sarcastically poured scorn on the Basque people and questioned their motives for fighting with the Spanish Republican forces, suggesting that an independent Basque homeland was repugnant to all Irish men – a clear reference to partition:

Every time I think of the danger it would have been to Spain, and to Europe in general, to have allowed all those women and children to live, I tremble. What right have these Basques to fight for their independence and freedom, or to wish to set up a Republic of their own? This is a question which every Irishman should ask himself, and, if he be a true Irishman, he will undoubtedly give himself the right answer. Clearly, the reader felt that the sacrifice of the Basque people of Guernica was a price worth paying for the safety of Christian Spain and Europe: I fear that we shall never appreciate the true value of the blow they have struck on behalf of Christianity, in wiping out the town of Guernica.⁷

The author sought to draw a comparison, through sarcasm, between events in Spain and the national question in Ireland. In contrast a letter that was published in response to this article stressed that the bombing of Guernica was an unchristian and repugnant act. The letter was signed 'Irish and Catholic' and argued that the attack on Guernica should be repugnant to all Catholics:

Pity for poor, tortured humanity, horrified bewilderment that such things should occur in the twentieth century of Christianity, helpless rage against those who have perpetrated such horrors – how can one find words adequately to express those feelings?

⁶ Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, p. 59.

⁷ *Irish Times*, 29 April 1937.

The letter concluded:

Sir, I am an Irishman and a Catholic. I loathe Communism and all that it stands for. But I will ask your permission to put on record my abhorrence of the blasphemy which associates the name of the Mother of Sorrows, the gentle Protectress of children, to whose care Catholic mothers in every land entrust their little ones, with the death-dealing instruments of war which have filled the streets of a Catholic town in Spain with the mangled corpses of women and children.⁸

Such an exchange of opinions over the bombing demonstrates the influence of the press reportage linking the attack to events in Ireland. The letters demonstrate how some members of the public interpreted events in the Spanish Civil War. The authors of these articles and letters are keen to assert their Bona fides as 'Irish', and like the majority of the Irish population, Catholic in order to stress the probity of their reactions to the bombing.

The *Irish Times* reportage of Guernica consistently published details that supported the Republican government's version of events. In the same edition, despite publishing accurate reports of the bombing, the paper acknowledged the controversy surrounding the attack with an article headlined 'Mystery of Guernica - Insurgents Deny Outrage' which reports an outright denial by the Basque President that the Republicans had destroyed Guernica themselves. The editorial argued that Franco's 'crusade' was not a religious cause, but rather a horrific attack on a defenceless town:

After the events of the last few weeks in Northern Spain it has become exceedingly difficult to maintain the thesis that General Franco is fighting a holy war. The destruction of Guernica has horrified the world. This town was the ancient capital of the Basques, hallowed by a thousand years of national and religious memories, and it was wiped

⁸ *Irish Times*, 29 April 1937.

out of existence in a few hours by the most ruthless air raid in the history of warfare.⁹

The *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, and *Irish Press* all published Christopher Holme's wire from Reuters with various degrees of editorial alterations. The *Irish Independent* initially reported the attack on Guernica by publishing Holme's article for Reuters, like its counterparts at the *Irish Times*. However, there was an editorial difference:

Guernica, the ancient Basque capital, was bombed for 31/2 hours on Monday by fleets of Patriot planes and was almost completely destroyed, writes Christopher Holme, *Press Association* Special Correspondent. The buildings left standing can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. Among them is the Basque Parliament Building with its sacred oak tree.¹⁰

The *Irish Times* used 'insurgent aircraft' whereas the *Independent* used 'patriot aircraft' in their opening sentences.¹¹ The *Irish Independent* reported the attack on 28 April. By 29 and 30 April, the culprits were the 'Reds'. The *Independent* published the German denial that also appeared in *The Times* on 29 April, but it was the report published on the 30 April that quotes heavily from 'the latest communique from the Patriotic headquarters at Salamanca' which placed the blame on the 'Reds':

Basque fugitives tell us of the dreadful tragedies of such towns as Guernica, which have been burned and destroyed by the Reds while our troops were over ten miles away [appeared in bold print]. Our soldiers are indignant at the false reports spread by the Reds, who, after destroying towns, try to put the blame on our air force, which, during the last few days, has been unable to operate owing to fog. Guernica was never our military objective. Our airmen have only taken as targets military objectives and industrial areas behind the enemy lines.¹²

⁹ *Irish Times*, 3 April 1937.

¹⁰ *Irish Independent*, 28 April 1937.

¹¹ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 78.

¹² *Irish Independent*, 30 April 1937.

On 4 May, after some UK and French newspapers openly accused the Nationalists of bombing Guernica, the *Independent* published 'On Ruin of Guernica, Work of Red Incendiaries - Striking Disclosures by Nationalists'. The press release quoted heavily from a press release from Salamanca and unequivocally blamed the Republicans for the attack on Guernica:

With the unanimity which might appear to suggest obedience to orders, many English and French newspapers are using a comparatively minor events, such as the hypothetical bombardment of a small town, as the basis of a campaign designed to present Nationalist Spain as anti-humanitarian and opposed to the principles of the laws of the Soviet faction which dominates the Spanish red zone...The newspapers now crying aloud remained silent when in Madrid, under the presidency of the Red Government, thousands of innocent beings were murdered. Over 60,000 died at the hands of the Red hordes without any motive other than the whims of a militiaman or a servant's dislike.¹³

That the *Independent* cited English and French newspaper coverage suggests there was an appreciation of the power of the press and its ability to inform public debate. The paper also suggests that English and French newspapers were hyping the attack on Guernica to embarrass Franco. In the same paragraph it draws the reader's attention to Soviet involvement with the Madrid Government, all, apparently, in an attempt to discredit the Republican claims.

The *Irish Press* first published an account of the attack on 28 April. Where it differed was in its headline and its source. By far the most dramatic headline of the national dailies was: '800 Killed in History's Biggest Air Raid Basque City Destroyed'. The story was sourced from the United Press and written by Emilio Herrero:

¹³ *Irish Independent*, 4 May 1937.

Every hour brings fresh reports of the terrible fate that was meted out to the city by the airmen, who, Senor Aguirre, the 34-years-old President of the Basque Republic, claims, were Germans.¹⁴

The *Irish Press* placed the article prominently on its front page. The paper was unequivocal, the city was bombed from the air. The *Irish Times* placed Guernica on page seven. The *Press* published graphic details of the actual attack, unlike the *Irish Times* which emphasised on the destruction and chaos at the centre of the article:

From the first planes the crews leaned out dropping hand grenades while the frightened populace rushed to a few bomb-shelters. Hundreds raced desperately for the fields where they were machine-gunned from the air by swooping fighters. Next relays of bombers dropped high explosive bombs, of which it is estimated that over a thousand hit the town. Incendiary bombs followed.¹⁵

The change in emphasis continued on 29 April when the *Irish Press* published a detailed article from Reuters that included Franco's denial that the Nationalists were behind the attack. The article's angle offered the reader an alternative to its rivals because it carried extensive reportage of the British response to the bombing. The fourth paragraph contained a statement from the House of Commons:

Mr Attlee, leader of the Opposition, asked Mr. Eden, Foreign Secretary, in the British House of Commons, last night if 'he would take immediate steps to address a collective protest with other Powers to General Franco and Herr Hitler' against the bombardment of the civilian population of open towns in Spain.¹⁶

The reason for the inclusion of the British response is not clear, but one could suggest that, as Britain was a major party to the Non-Intervention Treaty, its

¹⁴ Herbert, *Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History*, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Irish Press*, 28 April 1937.

¹⁶ *Irish Press*, 29 April 1937.

inclusion in a de Valera-owned newspaper was no oversight. The *Irish Press* published three articles that do not appear in other titles. In an article entitled 'Mission to Vatican' on 7 April sourced from the United Press, Canon Onaindia argued he was 'one of the few living witnesses of the terrible crime committed by German aviators in the service of the rebels at Guernica'. The article concluded with the intention of Canon Onaindia to 'send a letter to Cardinal Goma to plead for his intervention with General Franco to put an end to this type of warfare'.¹⁷

On 1 and 7 May, the *Irish Press* published two articles regarding the Friends of the Spanish Republic. No other newspaper published details of their statements or reports of their meetings. On 1 May Guernica was roundly condemned at one of their meeting in Hatch Street Hall, Dublin. Speakers included wounded Irish members of the International Brigades such as Frank Ryan, Willoughby 'Bill' Scott and Donal O'Reilly. The meetings was presided over by Mrs Hannah Sheehy Skeffington and the article concluded with a rallying call for Irish workers to 'join forces in a common fight against the agents of Fascist Imperialism'.¹⁸ The inclusion of the meeting suggested that the *Irish Times* was not alone in publishing 'non-Catholic' articles. The *Irish Press* also published articles that had the potential to upset the Catholic hierarchy. Moreover, the articles demonstrated that despite the overarching Catholic influence in Ireland, there was a movement that was not controlled by the Catholic Church.

¹⁷ *Irish Press*, 30 May 1937.

¹⁸ *Irish Press*, 1 May 1937.

The coverage of the attack on Guernica in the *Cork Examiner* began on 28 April. The initial reportage was sourced from Reuters. The content is broadly similar with a strong emphasis on articulating the scene and scale of destruction:

In the last 24 hours modern warfare in its most ghastly guise has transformed the battlefield of the Basque territory into an inferno of death and destruction says a Reuter message. Corpses are lying everywhere, while whole towns and villages are to-day nothing more than smouldering ruins.¹⁹

On 29 April, the *Examiner*, under the heading 'A Bombing Mystery', published Salamanca's denial that it was involved. The reportage by the *Examiner* is laden with references to the British response as a result of utilising Reuters, a British news agency. An editorial on 30 April set the *Examiner* apart from the rest of the Irish newspapers by criticising the 'unlimited salt tears' in London over the attack:

Whatever may be the status of Guernica in the past, today it is a town of some 3,500 inhabitants, about as picturesque or a squalid as a dozen or two dozen other towns and villages along the terrain between Irun and Santander. Its misfortune was that it stands on the land route to Bilbao, and could be used as a point of defence by the "Red" Army.²⁰

The matter of fact response to the 'salt' tears and the editorial's assured view that Guernica could be a point of defence for Basque forces was not repeated or asserted by any other Irish newspapers. The editorial on 30 April was the first in the national papers to discuss the events surrounding Guernica. It is the latter portion of the editorial which is of interest to Irish readers as the article attempts to equate previous atrocities by Republican forces to the

¹⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 28 April 1937.

²⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 30 April 1937.

bombing of Guernica and argued that few people in Ireland would be shedding tears for Guernica:

The Valencia Government's troops, regular and irregular, have committed atrocities besides which the bombing of Guernica pales into insignificance, but no salt tears were inspired by those in London "pink" circles. One wonders why all the sorrow now! Possibly a few silent tears may be shed in Ireland, for it must be recollected that at the outset of the civil war there were here some persons who expressed long-distance denunciations of General Franco and Spanish Fascism.²¹

By 3 May the *Examiner* published a small report that stated journalists had been on a tour of Guernica and were shown evidence that Government forces had deliberately destroyed the town. On 4 May the *Examiner*, like the *Irish Independent*, prominently printed the press release from Salamanca that criticised English and French newspapers:

At Barcelona also 50,000 or 60,000 horrible murders have been committed, and there have been many thousands more killed in Malaga, Valencia, and other large towns, often after barbarous tortures.²²

The Provincial Press - Donegal

The only mention of Guernica in the *Derry People* came three weeks after the event. It was also mentioned in Limerick publications and as McGarry notes, the attack on Guernica was only remarked on in the local press 'to refute' reports of the attack.²³ There was nothing to indicate that an atrocity by German pilots had taken place against the Basque town. When the *Derry People* did report the bombing of Guernica, it was only to name the town in an editorial that angrily condemned Britain's 'hypocrisy' over the incident. The editorial argued that on the very night that Britain suggested the creation of a

²¹ *Cork Examiner*, 30 April 1937.

²² *Cork Examiner*, 4 May 1937.

²³ McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', p. 41.

Non-Intervention Committee, it should have appealed to both sides in the civil war to cease supplying material goods to all belligerents. The British call to abstain from aerial bombardment preceded 'news that large-scale operations were proceeding against the Indian tribesmen and that a British 'punitive force' of 30,000 was 'making steady headway'.²⁴ The editorial, entitled 'The British Way', which also appeared in the *Strabane Chronicle*, accused the British government of downright hypocrisy for suggesting the need for both sides to stop aerial bombardment on the very day that they themselves had attacked Indian tribesmen:

In India it is not fortified towns like Malaga and San Sebastian or centres such as Guernica and Eibar that are the object of aerial attack, but isolated dwellings of sticks and straw. Britain's fresh pose of anxiety for the welfare and security of non-combatants cannot be sustained in light of the operations going on along the Indian frontier.²⁵

The editorial, unsurprisingly as the paper had not reported the attack in the previous weeks, neglected to inform readers the destruction of Guernica had taken place on an industrial scale. The destruction had been well documented by international journalists by the time the editorial appeared on 22 May 1937. The editorial was correct; the Royal Air Force (RAF), had eight squadrons that rotated in Waziristan, India and had honed its skills on the tribesman of Iraq and India during the 1920s and 1930s. However, the tribes' skills in northern India in attacking aircraft and evading aerial attack had been honed, unlike defenceless Guernica. The comparisons made in the international press

²⁴ *Derry People*, 22 May 1937.

²⁵ *Derry People*, 22 May 1937.

between the RAF and its German and Italian counterparts were not lost on the Government of India.²⁶

The *Derry People* was not alone in the misreporting of the bombing of Guernica. Similar misreporting happened across the world. The difference in the case of the *Derry People* was the article's tone. Thousands had died in the German attack on Guernica, but the *Derry People* demoted Guernica to third in its listing of towns which had suffered under aerial attack. The under-reporting of Guernica could be attributed to the pro-Franco ethos of the *Derry People*. Accounts of the attack were published widely in Britain on 27 April largely due to the fact that four British journalists were based in Bilbao. Steer wrote an unsensational piece on the bombing that was reprinted by the *New York Times*. The *Manchester Guardian* and the *Glasgow Herald* published another lengthy article by Steer on 28 April, based on his second visit to Guernica. Dr Southworth has argued that it was one of the most important articles written during the Civil War.²⁷ The publicity that the article accrued ensured that the world discussed the event, and it was the lead story in two of the world's best-known papers.²⁸

Although the articles in the *New York Times* and *The Times* of London ensured that the world was talking about Guernica, subsequent editorials which denounced German bombers and General Franco in the *New York Times* were heavily criticised in *Why the Press Failed on Spain!* This pamphlet

²⁶ Alan Warren, 'Bullocks treading down wasps?': The British Indian army in Waziristan in the 1930s *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, Issue 1 (1997), pp. 51-52.

²⁷ Christopher Holme, 'The Reporter at Guernica', *British Journalism Review* 6, no. 2 (1995): pp.46-47 see also; Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, p. 275.

²⁸ Southworth Rutledge Herbert, *Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1977), p. 13.

was published at the instigation of Luis Boland, Franco's press chief, who supplied Thorning with documents obtained from the *Telegraph* office in Bilbao. These documents stated that *The Times* required more information on the attack.²⁹ Thorning derided the coverage of the Civil War by Steer and the vast majority of American newspapers, and argued that the Catholic press reported the conflict with objectivity and truth. The damage inflicted on Guernica by German planes was, according to Thorning, 'insignificant in comparison with the havoc perpetrated by gasoline flames kindled by Spanish anarchists in their retreat' and Steering's despatch being described as an 'inadequate and misleading story'.³⁰ Guernica gave Thorning some misgivings but in conclusion he argued that the Catholic press had upheld its integrity and standards and reported the truth:

The news, as reported in the Catholic press, may not always have been sensational, but it was correct. It was not a succession of splendid lies; nor a procession of 'victories' which almost invariably ended in withdrawal, surrender or retreat.³¹

In this respect, the newspaper coverage of Guernica, or the lack of it, in the *Derry People* was not surprising, considering the Catholic Church's influence over Irish society of the 1930s. The repeated denunciations of the Spanish government forces in the local press arguably stimulated the public discourse. The fact that the paper's editorial only named Guernica in the context of Britain's hypocrisy over air raids in India demonstrates how the Spanish Civil War was 'incorporated into the domestic cultural-political discourse'.³² By

²⁹ Preston, *We Saw Spain Die*, p. 281.

³⁰ Joseph Thorning, *Why the Press Failed on Spain!* (Brooklyn: International Catholic Truth Society, 1938), p. 10.

³¹ Thorning, *Why the Press Failed on Spain!*, p. 20.

³² McGarry, 'Irish newspapers', p. 90.

discrediting Britain, and ignoring the Franco/German attack on Guernica, the editorial attempted to disregard any criticism of Franco and his Catholic crusade.

The *Derry People* ignored the attack on Guernica, but so too did the *Donegal Vindicator* and the *Donegal Democrat*. The fact that the bombing went unreported in the *Vindicator* and *Democrat* is not surprising, but what is surprising is their total silence on the attack in the subsequent months when it had become clear that German bombers had razed the Basque town. The press reactions in Donegal to the bombing of Guernica were not unique in Ireland. Outside large urban centres such as Dublin and Cork, the provincial press largely took the view that an attack on Franco was an affront to Catholicism. There were exceptions. The *Leitrim Observer* published an editorial on 1 May with the headline 'A Dastardly Act' which explicitly attacked Franco's forces:

On Feast Day, while the Basques gathered in Guernica, planes swooped from the skies, pouring grenades and bombs on the crowds. Then the fighter escort planes roared down, and machine-gunned the refugees in the fields

The editorial stressed that the Basque people were not 'the destroyers of Churches or the murderers of priests' and if the 'Reds' did commit these crimes 'a howl of horror would go forth from every Christian State', which is of course true in Ireland's case. The editorial warned the Irish Brigade:

A lot has been heard and written in praise of Franco as being the beau ideal of a gentle Catholic Knight. This dastardly act cannot be explained – no obligations of war could explain it. We hope Franco's followers in the Irish Brigade were not witnesses of the most atrocious act in history, which shall ever be a stain on the name of Spanish chivalry³³

³³ *Leitrim Observer*, 1 May 1937.

There was no reaction published to the editorial in the subsequent weeks from the readers.³⁴ The *Leitrim Observer* rarely published news from abroad, and seldom discussed foreign topics in its editorials.³⁵ The paper's editorial line on Spain is therefore difficult to ascertain, but the paper noted that the current Spanish government was legitimate and had won election in February, and was undermining the power of the 'juntas'. An editorial on 1 August suggests that the paper reluctantly backed Franco's insurgency by arguing that the current situation in Spain was complex but that the 'juntas decided to strike back before it was too late'.³⁶ The *Leitrim Observer* criticised the attack on Guernica in an editorial on 23 May, a clear example of the paper's indifference to the Spanish Civil War. The article referred to the siege of Toledo when government forces were attempting to dislodge insurgent forces from the Alcazar:

It was held by a thousand men against ten thousand, and history will wonder which were the most brave – the disciplined rebel defenders or the raw Government militia, who left regiments of dead in the breaches. Now it begins all over again. No one dare hope that this time it will be less terrible. War, civil or international, never grows more humane, and the longer it lasts the bloodier.³⁷

Radical and Religious

The Standard, 'An Organ of Catholic Opinion', was a weekly publication founded in May 1928 and was 'semi-officially represented' the Catholic Church. The publication was described by Conor Cruise O'Brien as a 'weapon

³⁴ For more literature on readers' letters, see the chapter 4.

³⁵ The first editorial on the Spanish Civil War in the *Leitrim Observer* was on 1 August 1936.

³⁶ *Leitrim Observer*, 1 August 1936.

³⁷ *Leitrim Observer*, 22 May 1937.

in a world battle' of ideas and ideology.³⁸ According to McGarry, in the 1930s the *Standard* often leaked information about suspected communists and socialists and their groups such as Catholic Young Men's Society and the Catholic Truth Society.³⁹ In late 1938 *The Standard* went into liquidation but was rescued by Peadar O'Curry, who would become the new editor. The new 'Catholic militant organ' would be a new paper with a 'wholesome full-bodied flavour of Christian social and moral principles'.⁴⁰ In an interview in 1977, O'Curry claims to have 'raised the Standard from the gutter, made 100% profit within four years of his taking over in 1938 and raised the circulation from 8,000 to almost 80,000 a week'.⁴¹ The publication, which cost two pence and published reports on sermons, Lenten pastorals and condemned communism, backed Franco during the Spanish Civil War.⁴² The publication featured articles by Professor Alfred O'Rahilly who was a ferocious supporter of the Church in his many articles.⁴³

The edition of 30 April 1937 did not report the attack on Guernica and its front page was void of any mention of the Civil War, but its editorial entitled 'Through Smoked Glass' commented on the visit to Spain by the Dean of Canterbury, Dr Hewlett Johnson and members of the Church of England and Free Churches.⁴⁴ The article referred to Madrid's forces as 'Reds' and argued that 'the fact that though churches are burned, nuns and priests slaughtered, and the most horrible acts of violence and sacrilege perpetrated', apologists

³⁸ O'Brien, *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, p.93.

³⁹ Fearghal McGarry, 'Catholics First and Politicians Afterwards': The Labour Party and the Workers' Republic, 1936-39', *Saothar*, Vol. 25 (2000): pp. 57-65, p. 58.

⁴⁰ *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 10 December 1938.

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 8 August 1977.

⁴² O'Brien, *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, p. 94.

⁴³ For more on Professor O'Rahilly. See chapter five.

⁴⁴ *The Standard*, 30 April 1937.

can be found in Ireland. The editorial contained no reference to the bombing. The first mention of Guernica appeared on 7 May on the front page. The article heavily referenced the *communiqué* from Salamanca and an *Irish Times* article which deemed that Franco's forces were involved. The front page article claimed that those 'clamouring about Guernica' were responsible for the 'systematically' mined areas of Barcelona.⁴⁵

The *Catholic Herald*, which circulated in both the UK and Ireland, and took a more direct approach to Guernica. During the Spanish Civil War the editor was Michael de la Bédoyère, who took over from Charles Diamond, an Irish-born newspaper proprietor active in the Labour Party. Diamond had been anti-fascist but Bédoyère changed the magazine's direction. The magazine had been founded in 1884 as a 'radical organ for the Catholic working class'. Under Bédoyère's stewardship the circulation had doubled after two years from 11,000 to 20,559 and this had tripled by 1941.⁴⁶ The politics of the magazine was that of a conservative upper-class Catholic persuasion with its opinion on Fascism becoming 'more positive'. Indeed, as Villis notes, the right-wing discourse 'seems to have been welcomed as a tonic to Hiberno-British insularity'.⁴⁷

Whereas the *Standard* ignored the attack, the *Catholic Herald* directly confronted the claims on 30 April with the headline 'Whole British Press Falls For Bilbao'. The by-line was equally confrontational that included all strands of theories into the article, 'Official Salamanca Denial, Reports Traced to Single Source, German? Nationalist? Incendiaries?'. The *Herald's* article began with

⁴⁵ *The Standard*, 7 May 1937.

⁴⁶ Tom Villis, *British Catholics and Fascism: Religious Identity and Political Extremism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 42.

⁴⁷ Villis, *British Catholics and Fascism: Religious Identity and Political Extremism*, p. 42.

rumours and accusations, including Franco's denial of the bombing. The *Herald's* position was soon made clear to its readers:

The *Catholic Herald* shares General Franco's indignation at the thought of the wanton destruction of an open town without warning, but until the facts are known it reserves its comments on a tragedy whose meaning is as yet unascertainable.

The article warned of the press falling for the Spanish government's line on the bombing as it had done since the outbreak of the conflict. The article contained an interview with Captain McCullagh, a freelance journalist who contributed to the *Irish Independent* throughout the civil war, who argued the bombing was certainly perpetrated by the 'Reds':

It is part of the technique of the Reds to bomb open towns and villages to strike terror into the people. Talavera, Merida, Badajoz, even Salamanca and dozens of villages have been attacked by Red aircraft without warning, and men, women and children killed.⁴⁸

The bombing of an open town from the air was what the Spanish government had perpetrated in other areas of Spain, the article argued. Therefore, according to the *Herald*, the bombing of Guernica was unlikely to have been carried out by Franco's forces. McCullagh was correct. Durango, Eibar and other towns had suffered from aerial attack by the Republican air force. The *Irish Rosary*, like the provincial press, did not report the attack on Guernica. The *Irish Rosary*, a monthly publication of the Dominican Fathers adopted an 'extreme pro-Franco perspective'.⁴⁹ The publication was a 'vigorous' opponent of communism, Freemasonry and Protestant intellectuals.⁵⁰ Indeed, by the end of the 1930s the *Irish Rosary* was keen to distinguish itself from Fascism

⁴⁸ *Catholic Herald*, 30 April 1937.

⁴⁹ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 148.

⁵⁰ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 290.

and 'violent totalitarianism of the regimes on Continent' by stressing personal liberty and Catholic social teaching.⁵¹ The publication was established in 1897 and by the early twentieth century the magazine was becoming 'increasingly concerned with political issues'.⁵² This was the case during the Spanish Civil War and they published numerous editorials but never printed the word Guernica. In the June edition under the title "Sword in Hand!" the editorial argued that to defeat an enemy occasionally requires one to strike first when your adversary is weak, rather than to wait:

Anybody with any mind can see that it is sometimes necessary to hit out at an adversary before that adversary can hurt you. For it may be no use to hit out *after* he has hurt you; especially after he has mortally hurt you. Thus, one can see why the Patriots of Spain found it necessary to hit out at Soviet adversaries, before these adversaries could hurt religion and nationality mortally in Spain, as they did in Mexico and Russia.⁵³

The editorial did not make any direct reference to Guernica, but one could argue it justified the need for Franco to strike first at the Basques and their Soviet 'allies'. The following month's editorial reinforced the editorial's argument on the bombing of Guernica. Under the provocative headline "High Explosives", arguably referred to Franco's forces claim that Republicans forces destroyed the town with explosives in order to win a propaganda battle against Franco. The editorial referenced the Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr Magean, who stated 'immorality and atheism are the high explosives with which the anti-Catholic Press hopes to reduce the fabric of Christian civilisation to ruin'. The editorial continued:

⁵¹ Edwina Keown, Carol Taaffe, *Irish Modernism* (Bern, Peter Lang AG, 2010), p. 137.

⁵² Clare Hutton, Patrick Walsh (eds) *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English 1891-2000* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 254.

⁵³ *Irish Rosary*, June 1937.

The high explosives of Catholic truth and Catholic reasoning are infinitely more effective, far higher and much more explosive, *when brought into action*.⁵⁴

Clearly, the editorial referenced the high explosives that were used in the attack on Guernica. There is no indication that the over-use of the term 'high explosives' and the obvious implication of the italics '*when brought into action*' referred to anything other than the attack on Guernica, even if not mentioned by name.

The short-lived *Irish Democrat* was launched on 27 March 1937 and was published by the Progressive Publications Society. The publication was financially backed by the Republican Congress, the Communist Party of Ireland and the Socialist Party. According to O'Connor, there were other contributions to the paper but they remain unknown. The first editor of the paper was Frank Ryan who was on 'convalescence' from Spain but was succeeded by Séan Murray in June 1937 when Ryan returned to the front line in Spain. The paper was 8 pages in length and was vehemently pro-Franco in its reportage. O'Connor argues the *Irish Democrat* was, 'a big improvement on the *Worker*' and contained a broader array of writers but kept its focus on Spain.⁵⁵ The publications interpretation of the war in Spain remained anti-Franco but it ceased to exist after 13 March 1938.

The *Irish Democrat* reported the attack on Guernica with such detail and confidence that one would be mistaken for thinking the paper had a correspondent on the ground. An article was published on 1 May 1937 on Guernica used language and sentences akin to that of the *Irish Independent*

⁵⁴ *Irish Rosary*, June 1937.

⁵⁵ Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-43* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), p. 217.

– ‘shattering defeat’ for example or ‘the Basque Nation are chosen for massacre’. The *Irish Independent* was referenced in the article and ‘heads the massacre news’.⁵⁶ The first sentence is striking: ‘Not since Mussolini sprayed his mustard gas over the defenceless people of Abyssinia, has anything so shocking occurred as the latest massacre on the Basque Front’. The editorial was in no doubt, the attack on Guernica smacked of weakness by Franco and Hitler. The *Irish Democrat*, like the *Derry Standard*, used Guernica to draw a parallel with Ireland:

From every organisation, club and individual, protests should go forth against this Fascist campaign in Ireland, for sympathy with the heroic Basque people, and for a closing of the ranks in a common struggle against the most vicious and barbarous scourge of our time – Fascism, open and disguised.⁵⁷

Northern Ireland

A paper that shared the *Irish Independent*’s ideological position on the Spanish Civil War was the *Derry Journal*. The paper was established in 1772 and was called the *Londonderry Journal* and was a Unionist paper. It supported Catholic emancipation in 1829 that marks its transition to a nationalist newspaper. In the 1930s the paper was biweekly consisting of 14 pages and cost two pence. The paper’s header claims the circulation, that cannot be verified, exceeds by ‘several thousand copies the joint issue of the other Derry papers’.⁵⁸ In the 1930s the paper was owned edited by J.J. McCarroll during the initial years of the Spanish Civil but passed away in March 1937.⁵⁹ He was an ardent nationalist who supported the Gaelic League and a

⁵⁶ *Irish Democrat*, 1 May 1937.

⁵⁷ *Irish Democrat*, 1 May 1937.

⁵⁸ *Derry Journal*, 1 January 1936.

⁵⁹ McCarroll’s files at PRONI do not reveal any reference to the Spanish Civil War, but they do reveal a wealth of data on libel actions taken against McCarroll in the 1920s and personal

fervent GAA fan. During McCarroll's reign as editor, the paper was briefly banned in 1932 for reasons that still remain unclear. Gardaí in Donegal seized the newspapers apparently on orders from Dublin, but the Department of Justice denied this. According to McClements the paper 'drew its influence from northern nationalism and the republicanism of Donegal, rather than from the strand of nationalism espoused by Cumann na nGaedheal'.⁶⁰ The paper was vehemently anti-communist in its outlook and ran advertisements during the 1932 election that warned the Communist Party of Ireland 'calls for support for the I.R.A candidates in Derry, Belfast, Down and Armagh. The Communists want M'Cool [sic] elected. DO YOU?'.⁶¹ Furthermore, J.J. McCarroll also spoke to a Catholic Truth Conference on 15 October 1920. Details of this talk are not available but adds weight to McCarroll's religious beliefs and his editorial outlook.⁶² J.J. McCarroll's son, Frank McCarroll took over as editor after his father's death. He has the same politics as his father and accompanied De Valera's car through Derry on a visit in 1951.⁶³

The *Journal's* reportage was laced with anti-British editorials, articles and headlines alongside its coverage of the Spanish Civil War. An article on 28 April, headlined 'Franco's Smashing Reply To Britain', detailed the Nationalists' victories in the Basque region, but declined to report the attack on Guernica despite a sub-heading entitled 'Ancient Basque Capital Wiped

letters from Sydney Redwood from the *Irish News* complaining of undue attacks by the Derry Journal on them. See: Files of the correspondence and papers of J.J. McCarroll, M.P. editor of the Derry Journal, 1922-1947 T2712, T27/2/2

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 20 August 2016. See also: Files of the correspondence and papers of J.J. McCarroll, M.P. editor of the Derry Journal, 1922-1947 T2712

⁶¹ File is only dated 1932. Files of the correspondence and papers of J.J. McCarroll, M.P. editor of the Derry Journal, 1922-1947 T2712

⁶² Files of the correspondence and papers of J.J. McCarroll, M.P. editor of the Derry Journal, 1922-1947 T2712

⁶³ *Derry Journal*, 4 July 1951.

Out'. The majority of major publications by the 28 April had published details of the attack. The first paragraph of the *Journal's* article mentions Britain twice while the second named Ochandiane, Elorria, Durango, Eibar and Marquina as towns captured by the Nationalists. Guernica was not named:

General Franco has delivered a smashing reply to Britain's helping, under the protection of the guns of her Navy, British merchantmen to the blockade of Bilbao and bring the food to the Reds in that beleaguered city.⁶⁴

One can only deduce from Guernica's exclusion that the potential reputational damage to the Nationalist cause resulting from the attack was not lost on the *Derry Journal*. By the 30 April the devastation in Guernica was clear. The *Journal* ran with the headline 'Truth About Guernica' and quoted a British businessman who claimed that Guernica had a large munitions factory that supplied the vast majority of Bilbao's munitions. This persistent claim by Nationalists sparked intense scholarly debate and has been researched at length. The claim was used in order to justify the attack on an unarmed open Basque town.⁶⁵ Like its counterparts in Donegal, the *Journal* used the attack on Guernica to accuse Britain, and on this occasion British newspapers, of hypocrisy in light of the massacre and murder of nuns and priests in late July 1936:

It is significant that none of these [British newspapers] made any protest against the torturing and murdering of priests and nuns, the horrible desecration of the dead, and the burning of churches. On the contrary, they either denied or sought to justify these abominable crimes.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Derry Journal*, 28 April 1937.

⁶⁵ For extensive detail see: Southworth Rutledge Herbert, *Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy, Propaganda, and History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1977)

⁶⁶ *Derry Journal*, 30 April 1937.

On 5 May the paper carried the denunciations of the press from Franco's regime in Salamanca. The statement was released to Reuters and then picked up by the *Journal* which argued that Guernica was a strategic military site 'filled with troops retiring towards other defences'. The counter-propaganda was a tactic of Franco's regime to mitigate the negative publicity outside Spain. The statement went on to argue that the destruction of Guernica was the work of incendiaries:

But the destruction of Guernica, the great fire at Guernica, the explosions, which during a whole day, occurred at Guernica – these were the work of the same men who, at Eibar, Orun, Malaga, and countless towns of Northern and Southern Spain demonstrated their ability as incendiaries.⁶⁷

The report stated that journalists had been taken on a tour of the town and found no evidence of explosions, only evidence of petrol fires and local residents claiming that 'Reds' destroyed the town. The *Journal* went so far as to publish a picture of Nationalist soldiers in the ruins of Guernica, the only paper in the north-west to do so during the civil war, with the caption:

Nationalist soldiers searching for wounded in the Red Basques' munitions town, Guernica, after it had been destroyed by the Reds themselves retreating before General Mola's army.⁶⁸

The *Irish News*, like the *Derry Journal*, was a nationalist paper and regarded as 'one of the most rabid pro-Franco propagandists of the time'.⁶⁹ It was edited by Robert Kirkwood, an intensely religious man, who took over as editor from Englishman Sydney Redwood in 1933. The *Irish News* was owned by the Irish News Limited with Daniel MacSparran and James F. Fitzpatrick as directors.

⁶⁷ *Derry Journal*, 5 May 1937.

⁶⁸ *Derry Journal*, 5 May 1937.

⁶⁹ Leo Callender, 'Franco and the Irish News', *Irish Communist*, No 61, Jan. (1971), p. 1.

The paper had a circulation of 30-35,000.⁷⁰ Kirkwood's influence was felt immediately by the readers and staff after the introduction of a column titled "Mrs Twigglety", which was based on the city's gossip, and which became exceptionally popular with 'Belfast exiles' from around the world who corresponded with the paper.⁷¹ He was an active editor and often pursued leads. He was once famously escorted out of Lord Londonderry's home in Mountstewart with the remark, 'My home is not open to the *Irish News*'.⁷² He had a background in provincial journalism but, like many Irish journalists, he had worked in London with the *Irish Catholic*. A 'shy and bookish' individual, Kirkwood ensured that the paper, 'Advocated moderate nationalism and the championship of Catholic causes such as the Franco side in the Spanish Civil War'.⁷³ The disdain and animosity for the 'Red campaign' in the Spanish Civil War paved the way for a public spat with Belfast Labour MP, Harry Midgley who accused Kirkwood and the *Irish News* of 'deluding Catholic workers' over the Spanish Civil War. It appears that Catholicism was the defining factor in Kirkwood's admiration for Franco because he held no love for Hitler or Mussolini who did not possess a 'Christian philosophy'.⁷⁴ However, the editorial on Guernica was significantly different than other Catholic newspapers. The attack was not ignored but was analysed extensively. The

⁷⁰ Viscount Camrose, *British Newspapers and their Controllers* (Cassell and Company Limited, London, 1947), p. 142. See also: Arthur Aughey & John Oakland, *Irish Civilization: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2012), p. 322.

⁷¹ Pat Buckley, *Faith and Fatherland: the Irish news, the Catholic hierarchy and the management of dissidents* (Belfast Historical and Educational Society; Irish News Book, 1952), p. 31.

⁷² James Kelly, *Bonfires on the Hillside: An Eyewitness Account of Political Upheaval in Northern Ireland* (Fountain Publishing, Belfast, 1995), p. 89.

⁷³ Dermot Keogh and Andrew McCarthy, *The Making of the Irish Constitution 1937* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2007), p. 200.

⁷⁴ Eamon Phoenix, *A Century of Northern Life: The Irish News and 100 Years of Ulster History* (Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, 1995), p. 31.

conclusions were pro-Franco, but nonetheless indicated a degree of openness that was absent from other Catholic publications.

The attack on Guernica did not alter the paper's editorial stance, but it did lead to a flurry of editorials that questioned the motives of the nationalists in Spain. An editorial on 28 April laid the blame for the bombing with the communist leaders of the Basque people:

The blame for the horrors of the air raid that has caused hundreds of deaths must not be put on the men who carried out the dread work, but upon the Red leaders who deliberately led the Basques to destruction. The raid is an episode of a grim warfare, and the Communists would demand nothing better than an opportunity for reprisal. This is a fact that the public should remember when faced with propaganda from Red quarters as a direct result of the slaughter of the Basques.⁷⁵

There was a clear difference in editorial techniques between the two nationalist newspapers in Northern Ireland. The *Irish News*' editorial, entitled 'Death From the Air' published on the same day as other major newspapers, broke with news on the attack and was the first editorial about Guernica in Northern Ireland. The *Derry Journal* rushed to belittle the reports of the attack and by 30 April had concluded that the retreating 'Reds' had set fire to Guernica. The *Irish News* instead published an editorial that did not deny that an attack had taken place but argued that blame should not be laid at the door of Franco's forces.⁷⁶

Mirroring the ideological difference between the two communities in Derry, the *Londonderry Sentinel* had an alternative perspective on Guernica. The *Londonderry Sentinel* was established in 1829 and rose to become one

⁷⁵ *Irish News*, 28 April 1937.

⁷⁶ *Irish News*, 28 April 1937.

of the most popular newspapers in the north west.⁷⁷ During the Spanish Civil War, the editor of the *Londonderry Sentinel* was Major J. Colhoun. During the First World War Major Colhoun had served the entirety of the conflict with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and had been awarded the Military Cross.⁷⁸ His brother, Captain W.A. Colhoun, M.C. Royal Irish Fusiliers was wounded in France and was also awarded the Military Cross for his service in Salonika (Thessaloniki), Greece.⁷⁹

Major J. Colhoun, who died on 6 September 1945, suffered tragedy in his life outside the theatre of war. Both his sons died. Samuel was aged nineteen and died in 1939 and William died aged twenty in 1943. Major J. Colhoun was a wealthy man leaving £25,874 in his Will. He lived in Grianlagh, Shantallow in Derry. As well as being the editor of the paper, he was an ardent Unionist who undertook numerous roles within the community. During his time as the editor he was President of the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce, President of the Derry East Ward Unionist Association, President of the Londonderry Branch of the British Legion and Vice President of the Londonderry Boy Scouts Association.⁸⁰ The numerous titles and responsibilities that Major J. Colhoun took on underpins the political outlook of his newspaper and his personal politics which were 'inextricably mixed'. His predecessor in the role of editor was also strongly linked with Unionism. James Lyttle was a 'fervent' member of the Ulster Special Constabulary, commonly known as the B-Specials. Although Major J. Colhoun did not depart from the

⁷⁷ Hugh Oram, *A History of Newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983* (Dublin, MO Books, 1983), p. 51.

⁷⁸ *Irish Times*, 07 September 1945 see also: Oram, *A History of Newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983*, p. 169.

⁷⁹ *Irish Times*, 21 April 1917.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 12 February 1935 & 15 February 1935.

government's line of non-intervention in Spain, his editorials often lamented the role of Dublin and O'Duffy and compared the propaganda produced by publications in the Free State to the treatment of Loyalists pre-1922.

The *Londonderry Sentinel* first published details of the attack on Guernica in an editorial on 29 April that outlined the attack and lavished praise on Britain for its success in 'localising the Spanish conflict':

Despite the latest outrage, the ruthless destruction by insurgent aircraft, in charge of German aviators, of Guernica, the defenceless 'Holy City' of the Basques, all commentators recognise that the danger of war has definitely receded, and much credit for this is due to the success of the British government in localising the Spanish conflict.⁸¹

The *Sentinel* published two additional stories that described in detail the attack on Guernica – at odds with what the *Journal* published on the same day. The headlines were 'Air Raids on Open Towns – Bombardment of Civilian Populations' and 'Use of Air Power – An Instrument of Massacre'. The *Sentinel* published a denial by Germany that any of its aircraft were involved in the attack.

The *Derry Standard* was a liberal Unionist newspaper and was purchased by its workers to run it as a co-operative in 1932 after J. C. Glendinning who owned and edited the paper decided to retire. 24 shareholders took over the paper on 1 July 1932 with a share of one hundred pounds each. Thomas Parke was a reporter was appointed editor and had worked for the paper since 1914. A comment from the 1936 centenary supplement stated, 'his leading articles are read with much admiration and interest throughout the United Kingdom'.⁸²

⁸¹ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 29 April 1937.

⁸² Hugh Oram, *Paper Tigers – stories of Irish Newspapers by the people who make them* (Belfast: The Appletree Press, 1993), p. 110.

Derry Standard's coverage of the attack on Guernica was less detached than that of the *Sentinel* or the *Journal*. The terminology used resembled that of the *Sentinel* with its use of terminology such as 'Government forces' and 'insurgents'. The *Sentinel* published articles from the wire whereas the *Journal* publicly backed Franco's position on the attack. *The Standard*, however, took an alternative route and forged a link to besieged people of the Basque region with a headline on the 28 April:

Spain's Horrors.
Huge Toll by German Bombs.
'NO SURRENDER'
Basques Echo the Derry Watchword.⁸³

The headline was a clear reference to the siege of Derry and is important for two reasons. Firstly, the headline differentiates the *Standard* from the *Sentinel*. The *Sentinel*, from the second week of August 1936, had backed the Madrid Government against Franco's forces. In this article, the *Standard* had publicly backed a Catholic population under siege by drawing a direct parallel with sieges in Derry's history. Secondly, the headline demonstrates a common link between the island of Ireland and the Catholic Basque region of northern Spain. The headline and 'Derry's Watchword' directly linked Ireland and Spain. The rest of the reports in the *Standard* consisted agency reports that placed a strong emphasis on Britain's response. An editorial on 5 May asserted that O'Duffy's Irish Brigade's homeward departure was to be welcomed but acknowledged that 'Erin's sons, as Irishmen usually are, were in the thick of the fray'. The editorial argued that the Spanish Civil War consisted of a myriad

⁸³ *Derry Standard*, 28 April 1937.

of ideas which had culminated in the attack on Guernica, highlighting the pretensions of Franco's actions:

The ruthless destruction of the sacred Basque city of Guernica by modern aeroplanes supposed to be operating in the interest of Franco's forces has shocked the whole civilised world. That surely throws a strange light on the pretensions of the insurgents.

The editorial linked the civil war to the Spanish Armada's attempt to invade Protestant England:

We believe Government agents committed outrages of an abominable character, but their opponents are certainly not qualified to sit in judgement upon them, even if we overlook the Guernica bombing, of which Franco vigorously protests his innocence...In this civil war there have been committed acts as barbarous as any of the Inquisition days, so we may take it that Spain has not advanced very far along the road to civilisation since the dark days of religious persecution in that country which more or less coincided with her preparations to invade Protestant England, and, as one of the leaders of the Armada stated, to burn the Protestant Queen Elizabeth in the street of London.⁸⁴

Clearly, the *Derry Standard* was unimpressed by either side of the conflict and despite the option to capitalise on the role of Franco's forces, choose to query Franco's intentions rather than dwell on the attack itself. The *Sentinel's* coverage focused heavily on Britain's response whereas *The Standard* drew attention and alluded to an innate violent nature within the Spanish character.

The *Belfast News-Letter* was owned by Belfast News-Letter Company and had circulation figures of 30,000 and cost 1 1/2 d.⁸⁵ The directors were Commander Oscar Henderson, Captain R.L. Henderson and the editor of the paper, James Henderson. The *News-Letter*, which started out as a weekly in

⁸⁴ *Derry Standard*, 5 April 1937.

⁸⁵ Arthur Aughey & John Oakland, *Irish Civilization: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2012), p. 322.

1737, became a daily paper in 1855.⁸⁶ The editor during the 1930s was W. H. McKee, a native of Belfast. He was educated at Methodist College and Queen's University, Belfast. He joined the *News-Letter* in 1904 and became the London editor in 1916. He returned to Belfast and took up the role of editor in 1928.⁸⁷

The paper published a Reuter's report of the attack on 29 April by Christopher Holme. The unedited article blamed Germany for the attack. It was 30 April when the *News-Letter* published its first editorial on the attack. Under the headline 'Choice Before Europe' the editorial warned about the use of 'modern weapons' in the pursuit of conflict, a clear reference to a potential war with Germany:

Public opinion in the United Kingdom, and, indeed, throughout the world, has been shocked by accounts of the bombing by aircraft of the Basque town of Guernica. That is only one of many instances in which there has been heavy loss of innocent life in the Spanish Civil War, but it reveals such ruthless ferocity on the part of military aviators as to bring home to people in every country the awful possibilities of a war between nations equipped with modern weapons.⁸⁸

The editorial went so far as to label Germany and her fascist allies 'evil' for forcing, in effect, other European states to be 'compelled' to prepare for war. Like the *Londonderry Sentinel*, the *News-Letter* delivered a pro-British version of events in Spain and published debates from the House of Lords.

John Edward Sayers was appointed editor of the *Belfast Telegraph* in 1937 after turning down the financially rewarding position of editor of the *Northern Whig*. His predecessor was Tom Moles, who passed away on 3

⁸⁶ Viscount Camrose, *British Newspapers and their Controllers* (Cassell and Company Limited, London, 1947), p. 141.

⁸⁷ *Belfast News-Letter Bicentenary Supplement*, 1 September 1937.

⁸⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 10 April 1937.

February 1937.⁸⁹ The owner of the *Belfast Telegraph*, Sir Robert Baird, died in October 1934 and was described by Sayers as ‘the greatest Ulsterman of his day and generation’.⁹⁰ Baird, who was a Mason, persuaded John Sayers to stay with the *Belfast Telegraph* by agreeing to take on his son, Jack as a reporter. Sayers was born in December 1879 in east Belfast and educated at Methodist College. His fascination with newspapers started from an early age. Sayers started out his career with the *Belfast Telegraph* as a junior reporter in 1895, writing about the Home Rule campaign and specialising in military and naval matters. Sayers was also, like the paper’s late owner, Baird, a Mason. He was a founding member and Worshipful Master of the Belfast Press Masonic lodge, as well a devout Methodist, and was a secretary of the Mountpottinger circuit of the Methodist Church.⁹¹ He reported from the front line during the first world war and witnessed the horror at the Somme. His politics were of a ‘liberal unionist’ persuasion which suited the newspaper’s outlook, which has been described as the organ of unionism and traditional Protestantism.⁹² His editorial role lasted until the end of the Spanish Civil War, but he died from a heartache attributed to the torpedoing of HMS *Courageous* where his son was a sub lieutenant. A few weeks after this incident Sayers died of a heart attack. At his funeral the prime minister of Northern Ireland, Lord Craigavon, said he was, ‘a faithful friend to the cause of Ulster – a message from his pen carried far beyond the limits of Northern Ireland’.⁹³

⁸⁹ Malcolm Brodie, *The Tele: A History of the Belfast Telegraph* (Belfast, The Blackstaff Press Limited, 1995), p. 60.

⁹⁰ Malcolm Brodie, *The Tele: A History of the Belfast Telegraph*, p. 56.

⁹¹ Malcolm Brodie, *The Tele: A History of the Belfast Telegraph*, p. 61-62

⁹² Dermot Keogh & Andrew McCarthy, *The Making of the Irish Constitution 1937* (Mercier Press, Cork, 2007), p. 199.

⁹³ Malcolm Brodie, *The Tele: A History of the Belfast Telegraph*, p. 62.

Akin to the coverage offered by the *Derry Standard*, the *Belfast Telegraph* published a headline on 27 April 'History's Worst Air Raid – Huns Again on Warpath'. The dramatic headline succeeded in differentiating this article from other Unionist coverage. The emotive term 'Hun', was used to dehumanize the Germans during the First World War, was a powerful tool in a headline, especially on the day after the attack (other publications waited until the 28 April to publish any details). Furthermore, the lead paragraph was equally as emotive:

In the last twenty-four hours modern warfare in its most ghastly guise has transformed the battlefield of the Basque territory into an inferno of death and destruction.⁹⁴

On 27 April, the *Belfast Telegraph* published its first editorial days before its rivals published details on the attack. Aerial bombardment was the ultimate harbinger of the future horrors of modern warfare:

If the horrors "War" from the Air of [sic] war needed any accentuation it is furnished in the ghastly reading of the latest news from the Basque territory where, according to Reuter's agency, the battle area has been converted into an inferno of death and destruction...All details are not forthcoming as yet, probably never will be, but sufficient is established to show that towns and villages have been bombarded from the air and left in a state comparable with which the attentions of an avenging angel would have been tender mercies.⁹⁵

The language was emotive – and symbolic. The editorial suggested that a biblical 'avenging angel' would not have caused as much destruction and implied that the German Condor Legion acted as if carrying out the judgement of God. The terminology employed by the *Telegraph* has similarities with the *News-Letter*. Indeed, the rhetoric utilised by both papers was the strongest of

⁹⁴ *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April 1937.

⁹⁵ *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April 1937.

any newspaper in Ireland in April 1937. *The Northern Whig*, a paper that served the Protestant and Unionist communities that ceased publication in 1963, first published an editorial on the attack on 29 April, two days after the *Belfast Telegraph* and a day before the *News-Letter*.⁹⁶ The paper ran with Christopher Holme's copy for the Press Association (Reuters) without the emotive lead paragraph found in the *Telegraph*. The editorial, entitled, 'Bombing of Civilian Populations' spoke from a British perspective and argued that the government in London was as outraged by the attack as any other citizen might be. The editorial, unlike the *Telegraph* and *News-Letter*, prophesied Franco's 'overdue' victory:

The circumstantial and well authenticated reports of the ruthless aerial attack on the ancient capital of the Basque country leave no room for doubt that the motive behind it was indiscriminate slaughter and a savage determination to strike terror into the hearts of the entire population...The air raid, carried out by a large number of German machines forming part of the force commanded by General Franco, achieved no military objective. It was sheer barbarism. Incidentally, it revealed the lengths to which the insurgent commander is prepared to go with German and Italian aid, in order to achieve a victory which is already many months overdue.⁹⁷

The editorial employed a measured argument suggesting the British approach had been right to demand that both sides refrain from aerial bombardment. The Northern Ireland Socialist Party, whose meetings were the target of Special Branch surveillance, condemned the attack on Guernica. A speech by Dan Ritchie directly linked the events in Spain to the situation in Northern Ireland, and asked why governments were not helping the Republican

⁹⁶ Arthur Aughey & John Oakland, *Irish Civilization: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2012), p. 322. See also: O'Brien, Mark, *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 11.

⁹⁷ *Northern Whig*, 29 April 1937.

government despite historical precedence in Belgium during the First World War:

You remember how the politicians called on you to defend Belgium. How does it come they are not calling on you to defend Spain from the rebels? They never said a word about the bombing of Guernica or Bilbao, because the women and children of the working class don't matter a damn to the politicians. Many of us don't understand that what happened in Bilbao last week could and might happen in Belfast next year.⁹⁸

The attack on Guernica ushered in a new era of modern warfare, aerial bombardment on an industrial scale. Although other towns in the vicinity, such as Durango and Eibar had been bombed, it was Guernica that bore the brunt of Franco's allies, the German Luftwaffe. Guernica was the first example in modern warfare of a sizeable town that was razed to the ground from a sustained air raid. Reports by Christopher Holme of Reuters, or the Press Association, depending on the publication, were frequently published across the island of Ireland. The *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent* and the *Cork Examiner* all published edited extracts of the Reuter's report.

What is clear from editorials and news reports is that the attack enabled newspapers in Ireland and Northern Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, to present the attack to their readers in narrow terms. The coverage has been shown to be far more extensive and varied than current research suggests. Although the initial coverage contained the facts of the attack, it was the subsequent editorial coverage, readers' letters and news reports that cast doubt on the Basque claims.

⁹⁸ PRONI Special Branch Report, 27/06/1937.

In the case of the *Derry Journal*, the Guernica bombing allowed the paper to lambast Britain over its stance on the Spanish Civil War and its hypocrisy over attacks on the clergy. The bombing featured in a sub-heading under a pro-Franco headline against Britain in the blockade of Bilbao. The paper accepted the destruction of Guernica, but claimed that it was the same men who had massacred civilians in other towns who had set fire to Guernica. The same can be said of the *Irish Independent*, which, it could be argued, was the *Journal's* ideological partner in Dublin. The *Independent* also argued the attack on Guernica was a cover-up, despite initially reporting the facts of the bombing. By the 29 April, the *Independent* was taking the view that the 'Reds' were the only culprit. Unionist newspapers employed historical resonance to their editorials, headlines and articles in order, it could be argued, to convey a sense of the righteousness of Britain's foreign policy and its commitment to the Non-Intervention Treaty.

The *Derry Standard* claimed the Basque people of Guernica and the Protestant people of Derry had a common link. Both were a people under siege. This historical narrative was pressed into service to argue the British population in Derry knew what it felt like to be under attack. Conversely, the *Londonderry Standard* stood unequivocally behind the British government's position of non-intervention and its merits. The *Belfast Telegraph* and the *Derry Standard*, in their headlines both referred to previous incidents in history, specifically the First World War and the siege of Derry. Unionist editorials used biblical language to describe the attack as well as referencing and focusing on the British response. The Unionist response laid the blame on General Franco, while, conversely, the *Irish News* blamed the 'Reds'. Donegal newspapers

largely ignored the attack. Guernica was largely in order to criticise the British approach to an insurgency in India. The same editorial tactic was employed in Derry, where the bombing of Guernica provided an excuse to attack so-called British hypocrisy.

The *Irish Rosary* discussed the attack in carefully crafted language and alluded to the need to strike enemies before they could strike you. Guernica was never mentioned in the articles, but references to 'high explosives' leaves one in no doubt that it was being referenced. The *Standard* ignored the attack until early May, but only to highlight the indiscriminate bombing of Barcelona for the benefit of those who decried the attack on Guernica. The *Irish Times* presented the attack with a far more measured approach than its rivals in Dublin and published correspondence that was not to be found in other publications. One could argue that the *Irish Times* aimed to distance itself from the pro-Franco publications in Dublin and demonstrate that it was the paper of record. The *Irish Times* published letters from readers who sarcastically deplored the attack and even went so far as to compare the situation in the Basque region with that of Northern Ireland, a tactic that was not lost on the editorial staff of the *Derry Standard*. The fact that one letter detailed a reader's horror at the attack and was signed 'Irish and Catholic' arguably demonstrated that not all the Irish public felt defined by Catholicism and Franco and that some sought to differentiate their belief and those of the Catholic Church.

Chapter Three

'Have the children of Bilbao fallen into the hands of friends or foes?' – The coverage of Basque refugees in Ireland

In between the column inches of the voluminous reporting of the drafting of the new constitution in 1937, a small but significant debate took place in Irish newspapers and religious publications on Basque child refugees. The central question in this chapter is how Irish newspapers and religious journals contextualised the narrative of Catholic children evacuated from Spain in the spring and summer of 1937. This chapter will argue that opposition to the evacuation of Basque children to the UK was shaped by a historical animosity to Catholic children being taken to Protestant Britain. The 1913 Lockout in Dublin saw the establishment of the 'save the kiddies fund' which hoped to send a large number of Dublin children to England for respite. The attempt was faced with huge protests by both the public and newspapers. The same occurred in 1937 with the Basque evacuations. Research to date has, however, paid no attention to the small, but significant opposition to the evacuations in Irish newspapers and religious journals.¹ This chapter aims to fill this particular lacuna.

There were no evacuations of Basque child refugees to Ireland but the public debate over the evacuations was intense. The topic received significant scholarly attention in the UK after the formation of the Basque Children of 37'

¹ One Basque family had connections to The Irish Iberian Trading Company and settled in Ireland. The company was established to provide an alternative trading route for Ireland during the Economic War. The family came to Ireland after the bombing via Bordeaux in September 1937 and lived in Meath. The extraordinary story of the Gallastegis family, who became Irish citizens, is told in: Stewart Reddin, 'Irish citizens of Basque origin: The story of Ireland's Basque refugees', *Gernika: Then & Now*, April 2017, pp. 16-21.

Association in 2002. Subsequently, several MA theses and PhDs were written on the experiences and politics of the evacuations from Spain.²

The Basque Front

With the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 the Basque region was split between two opposing factions. By 19 July Pamplona and Vitoria were held by forces loyal to General Franco while Bilbao and San Sebastian had aligned themselves to the Republic. With the attack on Madrid hindered by bolstered Republican forces during the winter of 1936, the insurgent forces concentrated their attack on the Basque forces. The Catholic Basques were on the side of the Republic due in the main to the granting of autonomy to the region by the second Republic.

The blockade by Nationalist forces of the Basque coastline in April 1937 strained Franco's relations with London. The blockade was designed to prevent the importation of British foodstuffs and was in place until 20 April when a British ship left from St Jean de Luz in France and docked in Bilbao. Thereafter the Royal Navy escorted ships to and from Bilbao. After protests from General Franco, Britain stressed its right to offer protection on the high seas.³ After the final Nationalist assault on Bilbao on 2 June, the civil war in the Basque region came to an end when the monarchist flag was raised over Bilbao on 19 June. The Basques had been defeated. With the cessation of war, Franco began to call for the repatriation of the Basque children from England. Before the attack on Guernica on 26 April 1937, the newly-formed

² Susana Sabín-Fernández, "The Basque refugee children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK: memory and memorialisation" (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 2010) See also: "The Association for the UK Basque Children" Last modified on 23 January 2017, <http://www.basquechildren.org/association/research>

³ Tom Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 57.

Basque Government had initiated a plan to evacuate up to 31,104 children, mainly to the UK, Belgium and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The initial evacuation plan was never implemented. However, after the attack on Guernica the British government agreed on the 18 May to admit Basque children, but only under strict conditions. The maintenance and welfare of the children were to be the responsibility of the Basque Children's Committee, who gave an 'undertaking that no charge shall fall in this respect upon public funds.'⁴ No public funds used in the care of the children, only private donations. Adverts were published in newspapers, including those in Ireland, appealing for funds.⁵ On 23 May 1937 3,861 children arrived aboard the SS Habana at Southampton docks and were initially housed in Eastleigh, Hampshire. Smaller numbers of children were also sent to Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Denmark. France received children from the ports of Bilbao and Santurtzi.

Parents were not obliged to evacuate their children but were encouraged by the Basque authorities to do so. Advertisements were published in the local press detailing the plans and medical requirements and parents could 'freely decide' whether to allow their children to be sent abroad:

Long queues of parents waiting to enrol their children. In fact, sometimes the parents could not send their children abroad despite their efforts, because there were no vacancies left for their chosen expedition. In those cases, they often accepted an alternative country.⁶

⁴ Marquess of Dufferin and Ava. Speech to the House of Commons, 25 May 1937. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 5th ser., vol. 324, cols. 227–32.

⁵ *Sunday Independent*, 10 April 1938 & *Munster Express*, 11 June 1937.

⁶ Susana Sabin-Fernandez, (2010) "The Basque Refugee Children of the Spanish Civil War in the UK: Memory and Memorialisation" University of Southampton, Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences School of Humanities, PhD Thesis, p. 110.

Clearly, the claims in several Irish newspapers that Spanish children had been kidnapped and taken to England were unsustainable. Ralph Stevenson, His Majesty's Consul in Bilbao, had surveyed the damage to Guernica and was deluged by requests by Basque families to send their children away from bombs and hunger.⁷ Stevenson, who had become 'extremely sympathetic' to the Basque people, undertook a 'humanitarian role' when it came to non-combatants and was replaced for fear his sympathy towards the Basque people might provoke Nationalist reprisals against him.

Echoes from the 1913 Lockout in 1937

The reaction of the mainstream and clerical press to the evacuation of Basque children to England was not without precedent. During the Dublin Lockout of 1913 a plan was devised and initiated to send children of locked-out workers to England for respite and care. The reportage of the aborted plan to evacuate children of Dublin strikers bore remarkable similarities to the reporting of the evacuation of Basque children to England in 1937. The plan was hastily devised by the English-Australian suffragette Dora Montefiore and was approved by James Larkin on 10 October 1913. Montefiore's memoirs state there was a precedent for this type of relief in Britain in 1912 and Belgium and during the St Laurence strike in the United States. Two days after her appeal was published in the *Daily Herald* for homes, she had 110 offers, many of them from Catholics.⁸

⁷ Adrian Bell, *Only for Three Months* (Norwich: Mousehold Press, 1996), p. 8.

⁸ Padraig Yeates, *Lockout Dublin 1913* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2000), p. 248.

A quarter of the population of Dublin had no income and conditions within Dublin's slums had become intolerable. However, the implementation of the plan ran into difficulty as the Catholic Church took grave exception to it from the outset.⁹ Some publications, including the *Irish Independent*, *The Cross* and the *Lourdes Messenger*, reported the event as deportation of children for ulterior motives. The Catholic Church claimed the Dublin, and later the Basque, children's spiritual well-being would be neglected, and the press consistently warned against the danger of conversion to Protestantism.

The Catholic hierarchy objected to the proposed evacuation in a letter circulated to newspapers on 21 October by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh. The letter argued that parents who took part in the plan were not Catholic and were sending their children to a strange land:

The Dublin women now subjected to this cruel temptation to part with their helpless offspring are in the majority of cases, Catholics. Have they abandoned their Faith? Surely not. Well, if they have not, they should need no words of mine to remind them of the plain duty of every Catholic mother in such a case. I can only put it to them that they can no longer be held worthy of the name of Catholic mothers if they so far forget that duty as to send away their little children to be cared for in a strange land, without security of any kind that those to whom the poor children are to be handed over are Catholics, or indeed are persons of any faith at all.¹⁰

The concern for the children stemmed from a concern for their spiritual wellbeing in England, despite assurances that every effort would be made to house the children with Irish mothers or Catholic families. The furore that greeted the UK's decision to allow 4,000 child refugees from Spain in 1937 in some Irish publications was reminiscent of the reportage in 1913 for the 'save

⁹ Mary Clark, Maire Kennedy, eds, *A Capital in Conflict: Dublin City and the 1913 Lockout*, p. 139.

¹⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 October 1913.

the kiddies fund'. The same themes were present in both 1913 and 1937. When repatriation was sought by Franco's regime, the names of the families who had allowed their children to leave were published in local Basque newspapers and branded traitors. In 1913 the *Freeman's Journal* published twenty-two names and addresses of children who had been sent to England.¹¹ Both acts arguably aimed to shame the families involved both in Spain and Ireland.

There was much talk of 'kidnapping' and children being removed without parental consent. Indeed, during the 1913 Lockout, Dora Montefiore was arrested on the Dublin quayside and charged with kidnapping after members of the clergy and the Ancient Order of Hibernians obstructed the first boat crossing from departing. The idea that children were kidnapped or expatriated featured heavily in the press for both the children of the 1913 Lockout and the Basque refugees. *The Cross* and the *Lourdes Messenger* talked of the 'expatriation' and being 'shipped against their will' of the Basque children whereas the Dublin press accused Larkin and Montefiore of 'kidnap'. Little attention, outside the readers' letters page, focused on the physical wellbeing of the children. The coverage pointed to the fact that the children might possibly be housed in non-Catholic houses.

The *Freeman's Journal* published articles with headlines that bore no resemblance to what had occurred. 'Fight by Priests' and 'Children Rescued' suggested that children were to be deported for reasons other than their

¹¹ Tracy McVeigh, "Basque child refugees meet for final reunion, 75 years after arrival in Britain", *The Guardian* accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/mar/25/basque-children-civil-war-refugees-reunion> See also; *Freeman's Journal*, 23 October 1913.

welfare.¹² The Catholic Church took direct action to stop the children leaving Dublin when Father Fleming and Father Landers from St Andrew's Parish attempted to stop the first group of sixteen children travelling to England. The two priests succeeded in forcing them to retreat to Liberty Hall and further harangued and harassed the group that same evening while they were en route to the ferry. The *Freeman's Journal* went so far as to suggest that the children were being transported for conversion to Protestantism. This assertion might have helped to inflame the riotous scenes that were taking place in Dublin. To reinforce this assertion the paper proffered the example of Irish Catholic dock workers in London who had participated in the dock strike in 1912.¹³

Notwithstanding a genuine concern for the children's welfare and spiritual guidance by the Catholic Church, there was blatant hypocrisy on behalf of the religious authorities in both the Dublin and Basque evacuation cases. The Catholic Church did not want children to be sent to England for respite but did nothing to assist with ensuring the children's welfare before the formation of 'save the kiddies fund'. In the case of the children in Dublin during the 1913 Lockout, James Larkin claimed the Church authorities had done nothing for the welfare of the children until 'Save the kiddies', had been set up. It is true that due to publicity about the fund, financial donations were received and generous offers from wealthy Dublin residents were published in the newspapers. One letter which praised the strike and included an offer to house two children in Dublin, criticised fellow Catholics. The letter, by Labour

¹² *Freeman's Journal*, 23 October 1913.

¹³ See *Freeman's Journal* between 22 – 26 October 1913.

Councillor W.P. Partridge, poured scorn on the inability of Dublin's wealthy residents to extend the hand of charity to their fellow Catholics and argued that poorer residents had a better understanding of what it meant to be Catholic:

The religion that survives the demoralising and damning influence of the slum tenements in Dublin is not dormant or dead in the breast of the poor, but I am afraid it is not over-active in the hearts of our well-to-do Catholics in Ireland, when it is left to the Catholics and non-Catholics across the Channel to thus give them a practical illustration of Christian charity and humane consideration.¹⁴

Partridge's letter in 1913 bore a striking similarity to an opinion piece in the *Irish Independent* in 1937 by Gertrude Gaffney. Gaffney covered a period of the civil war for the paper and questioned the lack of hospitality for Basque children in Ireland in a column entitled 'Leaves From A Woman's Diary'. Gaffney took umbrage at the fact that Ireland as a Catholic country had not offered refuge to a single child:

It is passing strange that in this country so full of Convents and other Catholic institutions not a single Basque child of the thousands brought to England has been offered hospitality.

Gaffney's views on the evacuations put her at odds with many publications in Ireland. Gaffney emphasised the religion of the children as major factor in why Ireland should have tried to help the children:

Practically all the children are Catholics, or should be Catholics, and one finds the Salvation Army, always ready to succour those in trouble, undertaking a task that we here should have undertaken. There are 3,000 more of these children being brought to England by well-meaning people, and it would be no thanks to institutions here to offer to take the lot of them and distribute them throughout the country.

¹⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 22 October 1913.

The article spelled out the links between the Irish and Basque people and added weight to the theory that evacuating Basque children was bad publicity for Franco:

The tie of sympathy between Ireland and the Basque country, it is hardly necessary to point out, is of no recent forging, and even if one questions the necessity for evacuating these children from Spain, they must still remain our concern...But it is better propaganda to have children evacuated to England and other countries.¹⁵

Despite Gaffney's acceptance that Ireland was not offering any sort of sanctuary for the Basque children, the prevailing narrative put forward by Catholic-orientated publications was that Britain's motive in taking in the child refugees primarily to embarrass Franco. During the summer and autumn of 1937, *The Cross*, published by the Passionist Fathers, devoted editorials to the plight of the Basque people and the refugees. *The Cross* was a monthly publication by the Passionate Fathers and was overtly political. The magazine had a circulation of 7,000 and as McGarry states, the editorials from July 1936 that espoused a 'pro-Nationalist' policy that did not change throughout the course of the war.¹⁶ Stephen Brown argues *The Cross* was one of the few publications to 'have been much developed, taking the form of vigorous and fearless comment on current affairs.'¹⁷

In July *The Cross* published data claiming to show Basque support for Franco. They did not, however, explain the origins of, or the methodology for compiling these figures:

Taking the figures of the 1920 census, we find that 919,500 Basques stand by General Franco, and 204,500 have allied themselves with the Anarchist-Communist Government of Madrid and Valencia.

¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 4 June 1937.

¹⁶ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 142.

¹⁷ Stephen J. Brown 'The Press in Ireland. Part II: Some Catholic Periodicals', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, no. 99 (1936), pp. 428-442. p. 434.

The figures appear inflated at the very least. If 919,500 residents supported Franco's insurgency, one would have to assume that there would be no northern front. The Basque people would have not resisted Franco's forces. The editorial denounced the Popular Front for claiming that the 'Basque country is being devastated by Franco's aeroplanes'. The furore over the bombing of Guernica persisted throughout the conflict, but erroneous reports that retreating Reds destroyed the Basque town became an established mistruth in the reporting of the conflict.¹⁸

An editorial in the October edition of *The Cross*, reprinted in the *Derry Journal*, argued that the evacuation of Basque children was akin to 'kidnapping' and used inverted commas to describe the act as being carried out in the name of 'humanity':

In broad daylight, under the eyes of the world and in the name of 'humanity' the Basque Government and their Red allies expatriated thousands of children to England, France and even to Russia.

The editorial suggested the evacuation was the 'negation of humanity to detain them in a land where they are aliens and strangers. Can it be that there is more in this reluctance than meets the eye?' Like its counterparts in the national press, *The Cross* used the civil war in Spain to propagate its views on Britain:

Historical tradition dies hard, and the Basque episode is not unique. Cromwell "expatriated" hundreds of Irish boys and girls to the Barbados; not so many years ago the "souters" were engaged in the similar congenial occupation of perverting the souls of their innocent victims. Have the children of Bilbao fallen into the hands of friends or foes?¹⁹

¹⁸ See Guernica chapter for more details.

¹⁹ *The Cross*, October 1937.

The case made by the editorial suggested that the evacuation was a futile act engineered more for publicity than common humanity. The editorial neglects to inform its readers about the bombing of Guernica, one of the key actions that made evacuation a necessity in the spring and summer of 1937.

The November edition of *The Cross* was equally dismissive of the evacuation, lambasting Britain for delaying the return of the Basque children. Canon Craven's resignation letter as the Archbishop of Westminster's representative, which was quoted in the November edition, on the Basque Children's Committee, gave his reason for resigning as the committee's 'disinclination to consider any reason which would favour the repatriation of these exiled Spanish children'. The editorial's suspicion and distrust of the Basque Children's Committee was a clear indication of the Catholic Church's admiration for General Franco. The editorial on the Basque refugees suggested to its readers that the children were not in any danger during the summer of 1937. This skewed view masked the reality on the northern front:

Surely it is obvious that the children belong to their parents and to no one else; and that they must be returned to their parents with the least possible delay. They are no longer in any physical danger at home now that peace has been restored to Bilbao by the success of General Franco's armies.²⁰

There was no mention of the fact that Guernica was the catalyst for the evacuation of Basque children. *The Cross* was not the only religious journal to publicise the evacuation of Basque children to France and the United Kingdom. The *Lourdes Messenger*, published by the Oblate Fathers, first

²⁰ *The Cross*, November 1937.

published an editorial on the matter in August 1937. The piety of the *Lourdes Messenger* was remarked upon by Stephen J. Brown who said the publication maintained 'religious fervour' and fostered 'piety among the faithful'.²¹ Stephen J. Brown was a Jesuit priest during the Spanish Civil War. He was from County Down and authored several books on Nationalism and Irish fiction and was a prolific letter writer. In this period where there is a lack of archival sermons from Irish pulpits, magazines and journals act as a 'reliable guide' to the types of sermons that would have been read at Mass.²² Like that in *The Cross*, the *Lourdes Messenger* failed to mention Guernica. The editorial employed techniques that *The Cross* and other newspapers used in their coverage of the civil war, using the conflict to attack Britain. In the August edition of the *Lourdes Messenger* the altruistic gesture of providing a safe haven for Basque refugee children, notwithstanding Government hesitation, was turned into a selfish act. The editorial entitled 'The Basque Children' argued that 'England' evacuated the Basque children to win a propaganda war against Franco, the 'baby killer', the name coined by the sections of the British press after the attack on Guernica. The propaganda war, as argued in the editorial, was for Britain to acquire Spain's mineral wealth in the north after the south became unobtainable since the nationalist takeover:

In fact, of course, they were sent as a vast propaganda stunt, to try and arouse the sympathy of the English people-if it needed arousing – against Franco, the infamous "baby-killer." Think of the headlines such an event would occasion. "Basque children obliged to seek refuge in England from bombs of Rebels." And many more such. As a stunt it failed. To begin with, the refugees were stated to come from a famine-ridden, disease-ridden section of the front-line

²¹ Stephen J. Brown 'The Press in Ireland. Part II: Some Catholic Periodicals', p. 441. See 'Readers' Letters' chapter for detailed analysis of his challenges to correspondents and newspaper readers. His passion for religion and his argument that the uprising by Franco was just appears prominently.

²² McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 142.

The editorial continued to suggest that well-fed children were sent to 'English' slums:

In fact they were superlatively healthy, well-fed and contented children, far less deserving of sympathy than thousands of their little brothers and sisters who languish in English slums. So the British conscience went untouched. And with the fall of Bilbao, it became quite disinterested.²³

The November issue of the *Lourdes Messenger* continued the same vein as *The Cross* and expressed increased frustration at the perceived illogical delay in repatriating the Basque children to Spain:

The daily papers recently informed us that 1,400 Spanish refugees, mostly children, left from London - not, mark you, for Spain, but for Soviet Russia. Two Russian steamers conveyed them from London, and it would appear that the children farwelled [sic] their former hosts by giving the clenched fist salute...It need hardly be pointed out that there is no justification for transporting Spanish children to Russia. General Franco has guaranteed safety for all non-combatants, in the part of Spain over which he rules.

It was true that Basque children were sent to Soviet Russia as part of the evacuation plan by the Basque authorities. After Nazi Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941, during the siege of Leningrad, Finnish troops captured Soviet soldiers who spoke Spanish and claimed to be Spanish orphans.²⁴ However, no children left for Russia from the UK, only from Spain itself during the war. The editorial argued that Franco's Spain was safe, with an abundance of food for the children and that the British government was responsible for the children in their care. The concern over religion was not absent from the

²³ *Lourdes Messenger*, August 1937.

²⁴ Pete Ayrton, *No Pasaran! Writings from the Spanish Civil War* (London, Serpent's Tail, 2016), p. 44.

editorial was forceful in its sermon-like denunciation of how the communists would teach the Basque children to hate religion:

We have every sympathy for the unfortunate children-who incidentally are being trained *to hate God* – but protest must be made against their developing into political pawns. Their proper place is not Russia, but Spain. There, they will be at home. The language, food and climate will be agreeable to them. In Russia they will only learn to destroy that civilisation in the building of which Spain has played such a glorious role.²⁵

The message was clear to its readers; the evacuation was propaganda by the British government to embarrass General Franco's insurgency. The *Derry Journal* republished editorials that lambasted Britain which had originally appeared in *The Cross*, in addition to their own editorials that criticised Britain. The *Journal* consistently argued that the attack on Guernica was fabricated, and argued that the cover-up allowed the propagandists to capitalise on discrediting Franco's cause:

Right at the start the propagandists who themselves were using these helpless ones as nothing else than a pawn in their game of defamation of the Nationalist cause, overreached themselves, just as they did in the notorious concoctions about Guernica.²⁶

The *Journal* also accused Britain of double standards and asked whether the Basque child refugees who 'were shipped off to Mother England' deserved more compassion than the child victims of Britain's air campaign in northern India:

What provision did these amateur mothers of the propagandists, alias the humanitarian ilk, in England prepare for the infants of the North-West Indian tribesman when their mud homes were being blasted to the ground by aerial bombing – but not by "Franco's" bombs? Mothering for the one set of infants, their chance of smothering for the others! No talk of any preliminary exportation of infants for motives of British "humanitarianism" then! Basque infants are ever so much more

²⁵ *Lourdes Messenger*, November 1937.

²⁶ *Derry Journal*, 17 November 1937.

interesting than the other kind. The dear kind heart of the English spinster kind of takes to them in a very special way-in a certain set of circumstances. It is all so touching.

The author then steered the anti-British rhetoric toward the Boer war and Britain's tactics:

How the British character has bettered since, just less than forty years ago, when Kitchener, of tender memory, was herding Boer mothers, together with their infants, into mountain compounds in order to force their otherwise unconquerable men-folk to surrender. No talk of plastering Boer babies with English kindness then! If those same infants could have discoursed as eloquently and astutely about British barbed-wire as the Basques infants are alleged to have done about British benevolence and Franco's bombs, what a different story would have printed, or would it have been printed? Basques and Boers, how much alike the names and yet how vastly different their experience of the good, kind Sassenachs!²⁷

Furthermore, the article argued that the Basque children 'eloquently' described their plight in order to elicit help from Britain. In September, the *Journal* again referenced an event from history to illustrate to its readers the role that Britain was playing in the Spanish Civil War. The article cited the British Prime Minister, Disraeli, at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The Congress of Berlin was convened in order to make territorial settlements after the Russian – Turkish war of 1877-78. Lord Salisbury later admitted that he and Disraeli had 'backed the wrong horse', in this case the propping up of Turkey against Russia. The *Journal's* article argued the same had occurred in the Spanish Civil War:

As for those English who were so engrossed in zeal for democracy in the Basque country that they had no interest to spare for the peculiar conception of democracy which operates here by their own maintenance and subsidy, their own purpose has perished at Santander, the gifts of gold, too, they lavished on anarchy have gone like the consignees while the going was profitable. Small wonder the

²⁷ *Derry Journal*, 17 November 1937.

mention of the Basque provinces has dropped back into very small type in those quarters, Disraeli was not the last of his countrymen to “back the wrong horse.”²⁸

The *Journal's* tactic of comparing events in Spain to British history had become a well-honed tool by the autumn of 1937. The plight of the Basque refugees was not discussed or mentioned in their reportage, instead the readers were consistently drawn to previous historical analogies to explain Britain's role in the Spanish Civil War.

The reportage in *The Cross* and the *Lourdes Messenger* was challenged by the *Catholic Herald's* reporting of the plight of the Basque children and on 7 May, the paper urged charity and donations for the children who had suffered terribly. The tone of editorials in the *Catholic Herald*, which was published in England, were in direct contrast to the tone of those found in the Dublin-based *The Cross* and *Lourdes Messenger*. The opinion of working-class English Catholics was more divided with regard to the war in Spain than that of the Catholic press in Dublin. The *Catholic Herald's* tone may have been influenced by such a readership:

The arrival expected today, from Bilbao of 4,000 Basque children in England imposes a duty on Catholics in this country. Whatever views may be taken of the action of the Basque people in Spain's civil war, these children are blameless. As Catholics they make an undeniable claim on their fellow-Catholics for both spiritual and material help.

The basis of the article was an appeal from Archbishop of Westminster for British Catholics to do all they could for the Basque children:

I would wish that at least the children who are obliged to pass through your country, and who are the sons and daughters of most Christian

²⁸ *Derry Journal*, 1 September 1937.

parents who in great glory of their membership in the Church, may be received in centres or in families where their Faith will run no risk.²⁹

The publication of the front page of the *Catholic Herald* suggested that the editor of the newspaper was conscious of a strain of public opinion that wanted more information about the appeal by the Archbishop of Westminster for help for fellow Catholics from the Basque region. Furthermore, the lead article drew attention to the blamelessness of the children in the position they found themselves in, far removed from the 'luxurious' suggested by *The Cross* and the *Lourdes Messenger*.

The *Irish Independent* focused heavily on the emotional impact of the evacuation on the children and their parents. The paper highlighted the emotional behaviour of the children when they heard about the fall of Bilbao whilst staying in England. A bold font and a sub-heading of 'Crying Children' was employed to emphasise the emotional distress of the children. The *Independent* reported that the children had broken out of the camp upon hearing the news and a search had to be conducted to find them:

'Wild rumours were being circulated about the position in Bilbao and so we decided to give a true and accurate statement,' he said. 'Unfortunately most of the children only heard the first sentence before breaking out into hysteria'.³⁰

The emotional trauma that the fall of Bilbao caused the children was reported across the UK. Two weeks later the *Independent* published a story that focused on the parents of the evacuated children. The sources were not

²⁹ *Catholic Herald*, 7 May 1937.

³⁰ *Irish Independent*, 21 June 1937.

named but those interviewed expressed their joy at the thought of the children returning to Spain in the near future:

A member of one family said: "We are sure the children are being excellently looked after in England, but they must be lonely and want their mothers. It is perfectly safe here now. There is no danger, and plenty of food.

The article ended with a quote in bold text that mirrored the paper's stance on the child refugees that, 'It was unnecessary to send the babies overseas – they could have been sent in the direction of Santander'.³¹ The claim that the needless 'deportation' of the Basque children against their will to Communist or non-Catholic states persisted in the *Independent* until the latter stages of the conflict. A report by the Press Association was published by the *Irish Independent* on 1 September 1937. The article was unremarkable, except for a piece of sub-editing. The article was, in the main, neutral, and documented the expected departure of Basque children back to Spain after the delivery of letters from the families. The last sentence was edited in:

Owing to the non-recognition of General Franco, representations to the British government have been impossible, and everything had to be carried on unofficially. Patriot newspapers are carrying on a ceaseless campaign for the return of the children.³²

The same editing techniques were present in the *Independent's* coverage of Guernica. The alteration of a text to suit the paper's position on a subject was commonplace during the conflict. The *Irish Independent* consistently railed against the evacuation of Basque children to England following the attack on Guernica. The paper's stance was consistent with its reportage that dismissed

³¹ *Irish Independent*, 8 July 1937.

³² *Irish Independent*, 1 September 1937.

the attack on Guernica as propaganda against Franco's forces. Much of the *Independent's* coverage consisted of discussing the date the Basque children were to be repatriated and emphasising their unruly behaviour in England. The coverage, initially at least, had argued that England was an unsuitable destination for Basque children. Despite these protestations, there was little demand to house Basque children among the people of Ireland. Undoubtedly the United Kingdom was in a far better economic position to protect and care for the children than Ireland.

The *Independent* took a keen interest in the activity and destinations of the Basque children. In an article similar in content to the November edition of the *Lourdes Messenger*, the paper reported fist-saluting by Basque children who had been evacuated from Spain to Mexico. The article offered no evidence for this claim:

Basque children who were received by the Mexican authorities landed with their hands clenched and were met by Mexican children dressed in red and wearing the emblem of the five-pointed star. They marched together singing the Internationale.³³

At a meeting of the Catholic Young Men's Society in Fairview, Dublin, Seumas Hughes argued that the 'barbarity' of the Republican government in Spain should be compared with the cruelty inflicted on Basque children:

The cruelties inflicted on the stray children of Russia and the Basque children, shipped against their parents' wishes to Communist countries were parallel instances of inhuman policies carried out in the name of liberty that must be bracketed with the wholesale slaughter in Spain of all who stood for Christ, but especially the clergy.³⁴

³³ *Irish Independent*, 7 July 1937.

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 14 January 1938.

This was a personal response to the Spanish conflict which argued that the Basque refugees had been part of an elaborate plan by the 'Reds' to embarrass Franco in August 1938. Dr Walter Starkie, a writer and academic, visited the Basque region and reported on the situation he found there.³⁵ The trip included a visit to a nameless friend who lived in Bilbao and had been in business for the past twenty years. Asked his opinion on the Basque children refugees, Starkie's friend exclaimed:

That it was all a put-up job. It was a movement started by the Reds for propaganda purposes. Can you imagine what it meant for Basque mothers and fathers to have their children depart from them. Why, my dear man, don't you remember the Alcazar of Toledo? The defenders preferred to keep their children by them in that inferno and die with them rather than entrust them to others.³⁶

The article makes the argument that to suggest that the evacuation was an altruistic act was absurd. Starkie was subsequently criticised by Father Laborda, a Basque Priest who had been brought to Ireland by the Republican Congress. He maintained that Starkie was wrong when he claimed that people had suffered under the Reds and hoped for a Franco victory.³⁷

The money needed to provide for the Basque children was solely to be provided for by private donation; no government money was to be used for their care. Newspaper advertisements appeared throughout the United Kingdom, appealing for funds. A handful of adverts were published in Irish newspapers. The *Sunday Independent* published an article on a meeting of

³⁵ "Starkie, Walter Fitzwilliam (1894–1976)," James Whiston in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, see online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, September 2011, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75075> (accessed March 22, 2016).

³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 10 August 1938.

³⁷ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). p. 87.

the Northern Ireland Joint Committee for Spanish Relief in Belfast. The meeting was addressed by the Duchess of Atholl:

Although they had already repatriated 17 or 18 hundred children, the Committee had still a very heavy burden to shoulder on their hands. Any money given might easily be for a child belonging to a supporter of General Franco, she said.³⁸

The publication of the appeal with its subtle editing was aimed at Irish supporters of General Franco. It demonstrates that those behind the publication of the appeal were aware of prevailing opinion in Ireland, stressing as they do the possibility that parents of Basque children could support Franco.

The *Irish Times* coverage of the Spanish Civil War was arguably the most neutral of all Irish publications and acknowledged the full extent of the attack on Guernica. The attack's consequences for the children of the Basque population was clearly articulated. One article by Christopher Holme of the Press Association described the harrowing scene of the children departing Bilbao:

A loud speaker called out the name of each child in turn. Mothers and fathers in many cases found the parting hard. It was a painful scene. Trains took the children down the river to where the ships were waiting.³⁹

After the children arrived in England, the *Irish Times* focused on the attacks the children witnessed in the Basque country. In the editorial, the descriptions of bodies being hurled and families destroyed painted a grim picture for their readers:

Vainly have the officials of the Refugee Camp explained to the children that the machines are those of friends; the children refuse to understand that any aeroplane could have friendly intentions towards

³⁸ *Sunday Independent*, 10 April 1938.

³⁹ *Irish Times*, 6 May 1937.

them. This is particularly the case with the younger children, who are impressed with the notion that the aeroplanes have followed them from Bilbao, and that at any moment the cargo of bombs may be released with disastrous effects. In their homes in the Basque country they had seen their homes reduced to heaps of debris in a flash, had seen their parents and their brothers and sisters hurled to death. With such an experience of aeroplanes it need not be difficult to sympathise with the children whose faith in the benevolence of human ingenuity has been shattered at a tender and impressionable age.

The editorial used the image of a quivering veteran from the Great War responding with reflex action to the sound of a back-firing car to illustrate the effects of explosions, a clear reference to the emerging hypothesis of shell-shock, or post-traumatic shock syndrome:

For years after the conclusion of the Great War the sudden back-firing of a motor-car was seen to produce amazing reflex actions in men who had been under shell fire; they would curl up and hide behind the nearest obstacle.

Finally, the editorial gives a warning to Europe. The danger of aerial bombardment was the new reality in a Europe that was heading for a Second World War:

For the remainder of their lives the children who have been rescued from the aerial bombs at Bilbao and Guernica and set down in the shelter of the New Forest will fear the approach of aircraft and will run to shelter upon hearing the sound of engines in the air. When American gangsters fired indiscriminately into groups of children returning from school the conscience of the world was shocked: the fear of these Basque children, even in the sheltered English encampment, should go a long way towards the awakening of a new humanity in Europe.⁴⁰

The editorial stands in stark contrast to those in other national newspapers and the religious journals because it focused on the experiences the children had in Spain and the ongoing issues the children would face. The article stressed how airpower would change the landscape of war in the future. The

⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 May 1937.

reference to post traumatic stress syndrome demonstrated an awareness of a new development in healthcare after World War One, a reference that had not been used in any other article in Ireland in relation to the Basque children refugees and Guernica.

Until the latter half of June 1937, the *Irish Times*' editorials continued to be supportive of the plight of the Basque children. An editorial entitled 'Bilbao and After' described the destruction and hardship experienced in the Basque region, far removed from what was being reported in the *Irish Independent*. Due to 'abject physical and mental misery, the Basques were forced to abandon their resistance to General Franco's onslaught' and capitulated to Nationalist forces. The news caused considerable heartache to the Basque children in England:

When the children who came as refugees to England recently learnt the news there were painful scenes in the camps. The children burst into torrents of tears; some of them lost control of themselves completely, and even yesterday they were refusing to be comforted.⁴¹

The editorial was clearly sympathetic and aware of what might happen to the Basque population under General Franco and used the children's distress to articulate the point. An editorial entitled 'An old Spanish Custom' in July 1937 was highly critical of the behaviour of the Basque children, unlike what had previously been reported. By that summer, stories were being published in the press that detailed unruly behaviour by the Basque children in England, Scotland and Wales. The editorial argued that the honeymoon period for the Basque children may be over. The editorial argued that English children in the same unfortunate position as the Basques, would have never betrayed

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 21 June 1937.

their hosts' trust. Correspondents reported residents' fears and police actions against the children:

Motherly ladies harassed the various camp authorities with demands for a little Pablo or a tiny Miguel all for their very own; "Humanitarian" and "Disgusted" peppered the correspondence columns with passionate, if poorly-spelled, protests against the Royal Air Force aeroplanes which had terrified "our luckless little visitors." Now it appears that the Royal Air Force had a rather fortunate escape.

The editorial argued that the recent acts of improper behaviour, including incidents involving knives in Brechfa, Carmarthenshire, were far more than 'an old Spanish custom'. Children were reported to be throwing knives around the camp with 'deadly intent':

Now you see what we mean about the Royal Air Force. Picture a camp of English children in Spain. Before they had been properly settled in they would have organised football teams, camp fire glee clubs, hunt the slipper association, and-given fair weather-just a trace of kiss-in-the-ring. It goes differently with the Basques. They sharpen knives after breakfast, leave the camp, and try to sever as many jugulars as possible before lunch. The afternoon passes, like as not, with vivisection. It does not impress us to be told that fifteen out of 3,862 pack a knife, because fifteen is a pretty high proportion.⁴²

The tone and message of the editorial is distinctly different from their editorial in May. Gone were the warm welcomes. They were replaced with comparisons to English children. There were reports of riotous children, but whether these reports were true has not been proven. Under the title 'Fighting Basques' the article detailed bad behaviour by the Basque children:

Another outbreak among the Basque refugees strengthens the opinion that the sooner these are repatriated the better. The public are displaying a great deal of curiosity on the subject of the children being sent back to their native land, but those responsible seem disinclined to make any move in that direction.

⁴² *Irish Times*, 29 July 1937.

The change in tone and opinion was immediate and again compared the raucous behaviour of some children to the 'peaceful' homes of the 'Sisters of Charity' in Manchester where girls were being housed alongside some English girls:

The Basques, resentful of some remarks made by the other girls, set about them, dragging them around the room by their hair. Shrieks of agony from the dormitory aroused the sisters in the middle of the night and they had the greatest difficulty in separating the combatants. The Mother Superior says that ever since the girls arrived, six weeks ago, she has had nothing but trouble with them.⁴³

The change in editorial tone was remarkable, given the warm and humane words printed in late May. There was no indication in its reportage that their stance had changed toward the Basque children, but the tone of the editorials had hardened towards them perhaps due to behaviour of the children, but one cannot say conclusively.

Both the Dublin children in 1913 and Basque children in 1937 were sent to a 'Protestant country' for sanctuary. The tactics and headlines that were published about them bore little resemblance to the events that were taking place. The headlines suggested the children were being kidnapped and that they should be rescued. The *Freeman's Journal* in 1913 even published stories from an Irish Catholic dock worker in London who stated there was an ulterior motive for the 1913 deportations. The *Lourdes Messenger* in 1937 claimed eye-witnesses saw Basque children singing Communist songs and giving a clenched fist salute en route to the USSR from London. These two stories demonstrate the construction of an anti- Communist narrative to potentially influence public opinion in Ireland.

⁴³ *Irish Times*, 5 August 1937.

What is clear from the coverage devoted to the evacuation of the Basque child refugees is that in Ireland it took an ideological position that did not reflect the reality of the situation on the ground in northern Spain, nor did it address the humanitarian needs of the children. The response by the newspapers and religious journals was cloaked in a veil of religion, one that clouded its judgement. Names and addresses were published in both Ireland and Spain of parents involved with the evacuations to shame those who supported the scheme and curbs enthusiasm for it.

Editorials evoked historical precedent, using the same terminology and tactics regarding the Basque refugee children as they had employed when discussing the 'Save the kiddies fund' in 1913. Crucially, however, the criticisms against those protesting the evacuations also evoked 1913. Gertrude Gaffney of the *Irish Independent* noted the contradiction that Catholic Ireland would not accept any refugees, yet felt people felt obliged to complain when the United Kingdom offered sanctuary. Gaffney, like Councillor W.P. Partridge in 1913, was not enthusiastic about the children being sent to England, but both saw the Christianity and humanity in the evacuations in 1913 and 1937. Both Partridge and Gaffney took issue with the fact that Catholic Ireland had not offered to look after the slum children of Dublin in 1913, or the war-weary children of Guernica and the Basque country during the Spanish Civil War.

Some outlets argued that England should be looking after its own 'slum' children before taking in the Basques. The *Lourdes Messenger* made this argument and it could be suggested that it employed this tactic and used the Basque issue to criticise the British government. The *Irish Independent*

lambasted Britain's role in evacuating the Basque children. Appeals for the children to be repatriated were manipulated with subtle sub-editing such as the insertion of claims that 'Patriot newspapers' support the repatriation. The same sub-editing techniques had been employed in the spring after the attack on Guernica. Although the *Irish Times* had a consistent editorial line, its abrupt change in tone after the misdemeanours of the Basque children came to light in England was intriguing. Their editorial stance on the civil war did not alter throughout the conflict, but the case of the Basque children's alleged bad behaviour seems to have irritated the editorial staff at the *Irish Times*, who consistently compare the behaviour of the Basque children to that of the English children.

Chapter Four

'Ireland can be saved if we act now'¹ - Readers' Letters and the Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War prompted a vigorous response in readers' letters columns of Irish newspapers. The topics covered a wider range of opinions than were to be found in editorials or news-wire reports by correspondents in Spain. The intense debate centred not on the extensive reports of church burnings, murders and the growing insurgency in Spain, but on issues one would not necessarily associate with the conflict in Spain. The language was fierce and came from all political and ideological positions on the conflict. Readers' letters provide a source base that has not been utilised in previous studies. The letters are useful disclosing readers' opinions and glimpsing into the 'author's world view through a close reading of the text'.² The letters pose several problems that should be recognised and one must acknowledge the limitations of the chapter. The letters are short, and they are often edited, which may have altered their original intent. The letters that were published were edited and therefore we cannot compare the published letters with the original letters. As Dobson suggests, does the mere fact that 'correspondence took place – regardless of its content – tell us something about the function of written communication in the past?'³ There was no way to verify the letter selection process or the volume of letters received or rejected. These issues

¹ *Irish Independent*, 7 August 1936.

² Miriam Dobson, Benjamin Ziemann, eds, *Reading Primary sources – The Interpretation of texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 65.

³ Dobson, Ziemann, eds, *Reading Primary sources – The Interpretation of texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History*, p. 65.

notwithstanding, readers' letters offer an insight into public responses to the Spanish Civil War.

The lack of scholarly attention given to readers' letters in Irish newspapers is surprising. There is a rich tapestry of opinion and debate contained within the column inches. The letter was an ideal medium for public engagement in an age where the newspaper was the primary source of news. The two leading scholarly works on the Irish response to the Spanish Civil War, McGarry's *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* and Stradling's *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War* have not fully investigated readers' letters in the newspapers. This chapter will build upon and expand our understanding of Ireland's relationship with the Spanish Civil War through readers' letters.

This chapter will examine the three top-selling daily Dublin newspapers, the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Press*. The readers' letters for August 1936, the first full calendar month of the Spanish Civil War, will be examined. The newspapers have been chosen because they represent three ideological positions. The *Independent* heavily backed Franco's crusade whereas the *Irish Times* took a neutral view of the conflict. The *Irish Press*, owned by the president of the Executive Council, Éamon de Valera, backed the government's position of Non-Intervention in its reportage and editorials. The analysis is thematic and will feature the major points of debate in the readers' letters pages.⁴ Themes include Fascism and communism, the partition of Ireland, the formation of the Irish Brigade and British imperialism. Communism, Catholicism and Franco were debated within the readers' letters

⁴ The letters pages appeared differently in each publication. The *Irish Independent* (To the Editor), *Irish Times* (Letters to The Editor) and *Irish Press* (To the Editor) were accessed via ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times and The Weekly Irish Times and the Irish Newspaper Archive from 1 – 31 August 1936.

pages during the opening salvos of the civil war. The sacking of Badajoz during The Peninsular War and the Curragh Mutiny of 1914 were referenced in readers' letters when discussing Franco's insurgency in Spain. The letters forged a link between the Irish and Spanish experience of war and insurgency. Furthermore, some letters sought to unite Catholic and Protestant people by emphasising their common Christianity in the face of communism. The interpretation of the conflict across Protestant and Catholic viewpoints was considered as well as the lack of democracy in the six-counties. The vibrant discussions included a debate between readers and the Republican activist, Peadar O'Donnell. His letters provoked angry and impassioned speeches for and against Fascism and communism across the titles. Some readers wrote to O'Donnell under a pseudonym with Latin phrases to sign off letters, possibly they unwilling to reveal their identities during a tense period of debate at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

Number of readers' letters for each August of the Civil War

	August 1936	August 1937	August 1938
<i>Irish Independent</i>	87	5	0
<i>Irish Times</i>	20	1	2
<i>Irish Press</i>	15	0	3

The *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Press* both cost one penny, whereas the *Irish Times*, the paper of record and popular within the civil service, was double the cost at two pence. In terms of coverage of the war,

August 1936 is clearly period which drew the greatest response from readers. The number of letters published diminished dramatically in the following August across the three titles.

Scholarly research on readers' letters to newspapers in the 1930s is scarce. Studies from more recent times are useful because, as Jorgensen argues, the past 50 years has seen an increase in scholarly interest in readers' letter and are a 'enduring forum for public debate'.⁵ In 1936 there was little space for public forums outside social circles for citizens to engage with matters of public discourse. However, the debates that take place within readers' letters pages should be approached with caution because we can only analyse the section of the letter that was published. Letters alone cannot accurately reflect public opinion because they have been selected and edited. They are an indication of the opinion of the minority of literate readers, and as such are unrepresentative and occasionally somewhat eccentric in nature. Moreover, Bates argued that, although letters provide a rich resource for researchers, 'working class readers were much less likely' to have written letters due to 'a lower level of literacy, a culture of deference to the establishment'. One has to be conscious of this factor when researching the letters, but what they do offer is a 'glimpse of what was important to individual readers'.⁶ Letters to the editor, according to Nielsen, allow people 'to intervene and contribute' to the public discourse.⁷ The letters' pages act as 'facilitators'

⁵ Jorgensen Karin Wahl, 'Understanding the Conditions for Public Discourse: Four Rules for Selecting Letters to the Editor', *Journalism Studies* 3, no. 1 (2002): 69–81.

⁶ Denise Bates, *Historical Research Using British Newspapers* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword History, 2016), pp. 32-33.

⁷ Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007 *quoted in* Nielsen Kleis Ramus, 'Participation through Letters to the Editor: Circulation, Considerations, and Genres in the Letters Institution', *Journalism* 11, no. 1 (2010): 21–35. p. 22.

and allow readers to engage and debate with news issues and public representatives.⁸ The subject matter and the arguments were 'constructed' and primarily respond to the news that was published in each given paper.⁹ According to Stradling, correspondence columns within the major papers in Ireland reflected 'differing shades of opinion, most of them vigorously expressed' with the *Independent* 'particularly anxious to sport a mailbag from Fianna Fáil voters and Republicans who had revised their former opinion of General O'Duffy' in light of the perceived anti-clerical excesses of the anti-Fascist forces.¹⁰

Ends of the Spectrum - Unique Letters

Ireland's trade with Soviet Russia was the subject of a letter in the *Irish Independent* that was signed off 'GOD FIRST AND IRELAND AFTER'. The letter argued that Ireland's main strength in dealing with Soviet aggression and its role in Spain was to halt any imports that were produced by 'the forced labour of political prisoners, often Catholic priests or bishops'. Any further economic cooperation could have allowed the Soviet Union 'endless opportunities for Communist propaganda'. The letter acknowledged the extent of Ireland's imports from Russia and sympathised with the plight of Spain:

Spain was apathetic. God help her now in her sufferings! France, that land of so many saints is likely to follow Spain. Ireland can be saved if we act now.¹¹

⁸ Ibid. p. 33.

⁹ Wahl, 'Understanding the conditions for public discourse: Four Rules for Selecting Letters to the Editor', p. 78.

¹⁰ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) pp. 24-25.

¹¹ *Irish Independent*, 7 August 1936.

According to the letter, timber exports from the Soviet Union to Ireland stood at £312,356 whereas Ireland's exports were worth £24,552.¹² Ireland imported goods worth £1,305,400 from Germany and exported £609,487 worth of products. The letter did draw the public's attention to the extent of trade with Soviet Russia. It is also was the only one in the popular press in the period in question that attempts to highlight allegedly appalling conditions in which Soviet prisoners were held.

By 10 August attention was being drawn to the 'menace' of communism in all its guises in the readers' letters pages. A letter by 'IRISHMAN' sought to pressure the Irish government to act. The letter did not specifically prescribe what type of action should be taken, but hinted that diplomatic recognition of Franco could help in the fight against communism before it arrived on Irish shores:

Sir – In view of the atrocities being perpetrated against the Catholic religion by the Communists in Spain, is it not opportune that the Government of Catholic Ireland should take immediate action?

The letter goes on to accuse a 'communist agent' of selling books and spreading propaganda around the country:

Why are such people allowed to spread their pernicious doctrines throughout Ireland? Let the people and Government of Ireland take a lesson from Spain, and drive communism from Ireland.¹³

The *Independent* published a letter entitled 'Army of Crusaders' penned by 'ANTI-COMMUNIST' which, in contrast to the letters demanding an Irish Brigade, called for an alternative approach modelled on the crusades. The

¹² Oireachtas Library website
<http://opac.oireachtas.ie/AWDData/Library3/Library2/DL052509.pdf> , accessed 3 November 2016.

¹³ *Irish Independent*, 10 August 1936.

letter argued that countries such as Ireland and the United Kingdom could employ retired soldiers on standby to thwart any attempt by communists to gain control by organising a general strike. The rambling letter reasoned that these soldiers could be paid for by redirecting church funds. The letters also suggests that building further churches is a waste of money when all one has to do was 'look to Spain'. The author is dismissive of any division between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland in the face of communism:

As regards to our own country, the formation of such local forces should tend to heal political differences between the North and South. Ulster men have fought in France and Belgium side by side with their countrymen from the South, and they can do so again in the cause of Christianity.¹⁴

The role played by Irish soldiers in the First World War is referenced to demonstrate how both the north and the south could unite to face a common enemy, communism.

A letter by John J. Horgan, the Cork-born solicitor and supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party was published on 17 August. Horgan was the grandfather of Professor John Horgan, the former Labour politician and academic. Writing in 2009, Professor Horgan said that his grandfather concealed 'his authorship of the pungent commentaries in Irish affairs in *The Round Table*, for which he became the Irish correspondent in 1925...until a year before his death in 1967'.¹⁵ According to Professor Horgan, his grandfather had a unique and often understated understanding of Northern Unionism. His knowledge and understanding of the situation in Ulster was rare amongst southern nationalists. A friend of Horgan, Denis Gwynn, argued that

¹⁴ *Irish Independent*, 19 August 1936.

¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 15 September 2009.

his 'unflinching moral courage on any issue' was important for public discourse.¹⁶

His successful career in law and as a coroner included presiding at the inquest of the victims of the torpedoed *Lusitania* in 1915. He held his position as coroner until 1967. At the inquest, he famously pronounced a verdict of 'wilful and wholesale murder against the Kaiser'. He was an avid letter writer and regularly penned articles for the *Hungarian Quarterly*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Belfast Telegraph*, *An tOglach* and the *Irish Times*.

Horgan was of the few intellectuals and academic who contributed ideas and theories to the ideological foundations of the Blueshirt movement. Although his ideas and enthusiasms were the subject of debate within the organisation, Cronin suggests that these debates 'never really moved outside of the movement's official documents'.¹⁷ Hogan's inspiration was Pope Pius XI's 'Quadragesimo Anno', published in May 1931, a document which discussed the ethical implications of the economy. Hogan's main concern with it was its contention that the threat posed by class warfare was one that threatened the security 'of every civilised nation'.¹⁸ The drafting of the new constitution in 1938 was also a topic that Hogan was passionate about. Hogan stressed the need for a way forward to avoid Fascism and Bolshevism in Ireland. Speaking at the Irish Rotary Conference in Killarney, he stated that although the two ideologies were different they 'were fundamentally similar in practise'. They were hostile to personal freedoms 'which was the lifeblood of Western civilisations'.¹⁹ The threat posed by communism was the subject of

¹⁶ *Irish Times*, 15 September 2009.

¹⁷ Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 71.

¹⁸ Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 92.

¹⁹ *Irish Examiner*, 25 September 1936.

Hogan's *Could Ireland become Communist?* The pamphlet's primary concern was the threat posed by the 'Stalinist Soviet Union' and it also argued that a Catholic cannot be a 'true socialist'.²⁰

Horgan's belief in a second chamber in the government, notwithstanding his views on the electorate in democracy, is evident in his letter to the *Irish Times*.²¹ Horgan's letter, entitled 'A Spanish Analogy' drew parallels with the formation and implementation of the Irish Senate and the lack of a second chamber in Spain. He was reacting to Niceto Alcalá-Zamora's letter in the French press. The former president of the Spanish Republic had argued that there might not have been a civil war if Spain's Constitution had allowed for a second chamber and emphasised the importance of a second chamber in a state's pursuit of democracy:

He [Zamaora] said that it must not be supposed that the present revolt had the character of a simple *pronunciamiento*. Its causes were much more profound. He believed that the greatest defect of the Spanish Constitution was the absence of a Second Chamber. If they had a Senate there might have been no civil war.²²

Penning anguish with Partition

A letter in the *Independent* addressed 'North-Eastern Readers' who, it claimed, distorted the argument in relation to Spain. The term 'North-Eastern Readers' presumably referred to Ulster Protestants. The fear with regards the spread of communism in Ireland was the letter's main point and it attacked the ideology of the six-county Protestants:

In fact, we have in this country numerous people who have permitted themselves to be persuaded that the troubles in "North-Eastern

²⁰ Hogan, John, *Could Ireland become Communist?: The Facts of the Case* (Dublin: Cahill & Co, 1935) Quoted in Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p.93 & p.137.

²¹ Horgan also went on *Radio Eire* to prescribe the need for a second chamber in Ireland. See the *Irish Times*, 9 May 1938.

²² *Irish Times*, 17 August 1936.

Reader's" own territory are as much to be blamed upon the Catholics there as upon any other section

The message was clear: the history of what occurred before and after 1922 in Ireland was being distorted by Ulster Unionist politicians just as the conflict in Spain was being misrepresented by elements within the Protestant community:

Why is "Northern-Eastern Reader" so anxious to make us reserve our judgement where we have reliable information that priests and nuns have been shot down and churches burned, rifled and desecrated by hordes of mysteriously armed fiends? We are not at all waiting for "North-Eastern Readers" to define our attitudes in these matters for us: neither as regards Spain, nor Ireland either.²³

The letter attempted to dissuade readers of the *Independent* from viewing the conflict through the prism of Ulster Loyalism. The battle in Spain was between communism and religion where 'loaded rifles and revolvers are stuck in the hands of previously primed and incensed sans culottes too'.²⁴

The sectarian nature of Irish politics featured on 15 August in a letter entitled 'Protestant's Protest' and signed by 'IRISHMAN'. The letter did not indicate where it was written but argued that Protestants and Catholics were 'members of the One Body of Christ':

Sir-I sympathise deeply with my fellow Christians of Spain in the day of their dire persecution, and I agree whole-heartedly with the general tenor of readers' letters of protest against the Red terror. But as a Protestant I cannot help allowing myself to be side-tracked from the main issue to protest against what some of them, unconsciously, no doubt, imply, viz., that Catholics only, not Protestants, are opposed to Communism.²⁵

²³ *Irish Independent*, 4 August 1936.

²⁴ *Irish Independent*, 4 August 1936.

²⁵ *Irish Independent*, 15 August 1936.

Protestant were viewed as being less sympathetic to the Spanish because of their Catholic faith.²⁶ The letter attempted to find 'common ground' by condemning the violence and death in Spain.

A Unifying Moment? – The Formation of the Irish Brigade

The first mention of an Irish Brigade in the *Independent* was on 10 August when accounts were published of O'Duffy's appeal for an Irish Brigade.²⁷ By the next day, 11 August, letters were published from readers who argued for the formation of a brigade akin to 'the Irish Brigades of old' to fight for religion and justice:

I, as one Irishman who has not forgotten the part played by Spain in our history, am willing to offer myself for service, or, failing that, to give whatever help may be considered possible.²⁸

The remainder of that day's letters urged others to pledge themselves to organise and recruit such a group of men. Readers' claimed the brigade would be oversubscribed with a plentiful amount of financial aid available:

Sir – It is time Irish Catholics said and did something about the barbarous treatment of Catholics in Spain. Cannot someone in a position to do so organise another Irish Regiment to fight – not merely for Spain – but for our Faith? There would be no dearth of volunteers and I am sure there would be financial aid from those who could not go.
ABLE AND WILLING TO GO.²⁹

The formation of an Irish Brigade stimulated correspondence not only from people offered themselves for service, but also from people who sought to draw a link between the situation in Spain and the threat posed to Ireland.

²⁶ Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', p. 114.

²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 10 August 1936

²⁸ *Irish Independent*, 11 August 1936.

²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 11 August 1936.

Readers' argued that the conflict would not be confined to Spain if Irish men persisted in a lack of interest, and Europe would suffer:

We Irish do not seem to realise that the war in Spain is a decisive one between Catholicism and Communism in Europe, and that on the result of it depends whether all Europe, including this country, is to be saved from the grip of the Red Terror or not.

The letter was anonymous but urged the formation of a 'National Council' to coordinate the efforts of Irish people in preventing communism but also to aid those intent on physically helping the 'Provisional Government' in Spain. Indeed, the letters emphasised that Ireland was different from other states when it came to how it viewed the fate of Spain. The Catholic faith was by far the most important factor in prompting the Irish to volunteer. A letter to General O'Duffy by a 'VOLUNTEER' was published on 13 August and argued that O'Duffy's suggestion of the formation of a brigade was the only viable course of action:

The third and last suggestion of General O'Duffy is the most practical and from which we Catholics and Christians are given the opportunity of showing our feelings, The raising of an Irish Brigade is a big step and one meriting serious consideration, but it is the only real solution of the whole affair, as unless and until the nations of the world, and Europe in particular, send practical help –men, money, and first aid – to crush out once and for all this dreadful scourge of Communism.³⁰

Readers congratulated the *Independent* and General O'Duffy but appealed for money and hospitality to be sent to Spain:

I think the only help Catholic Ireland can sanely give to Catholic Spain during these days of her martyrdom is to send her money and extend hospitality to her exiled nuns and clergy. In these days when the gates of hell are opened wide against the Church, bellicose blather is the last noise that should be heard from us.³¹

³⁰ *Irish Independent*, 13 August 1936.

³¹ *Irish Independent*, 18 August 1936.

The letter stood as a lone voice of sanity in a sea of fighting talk for the future of Catholicism. Despite the clamour to organise an Irish Brigade for Spain, in the *Independent* in 1936 there was a warning in a letter of 24 August that sending troops into a foreign battle has often had domestic repercussions:

Historical precedents for this are not lacking. For instance, during the American Revolution the King of France thought to score cleverly off England by sending French troops to aid the revolting colonists. But these very troops brought back to France the ideas that in a very few years swept the King and his throne into perdition.³²

The author warned Irish authorities to take lessons from French history about sending troops to foreign wars but it was a lone voice that was drowned out by the clamour for an Irish Brigade. One such letter on 26 August was from an Irish woman residing in England (one of the few female letter writers during this period) who had conflicting views on the situation in Spain, between the Vatican's stance and the feeling in Ireland of forming a brigade. She argued that the mood in Ireland was difficult to judge. The British press felt that 'England will not interfere unless she is in danger of losing some of her vast territories'. Ms Hilton suggested that Ireland could not stand by while nuns and priests were being slaughtered for their faith. In years gone by, there would have been no hesitation in making the decision to join the battle:

Is Ireland going to stand by her Faith? Can Ireland bear to think of those priests and nuns, those women and children being slaughtered? If Ireland can, then Ireland is no longer Ireland...This is a not a political struggle. This is a religious struggle, and must be carefully considered.

³² *Irish Independent*, 24 August 1936.

There were no blurred lines according to the reader. Ireland had to become engaged on the battle field with 'a man and a nation with courage to show the Christians what they must do'.³³ The prospect of an Irish Brigade not only stirred the thoughts and feelings of Catholics but also Protestants. The letter was signed 'PROTESTANT' and stated that the family of Christianity was enough to entice Protestants to fight for Spain:

Sir-The majority of your readers seem to think that Catholics alone should go to fight in Spain. I suppose that is the reason why so few Protestants have volunteered to go. Christianity stands for all Christian religions, so therefore it is the duty of all religions to join the Irish Brigade.³⁴

General O'Duffy's letter featured in the *Press* and read more like a sermon than a letter. Regaling the readers of his activities for the 'life and death struggle for Christianity', he argued that:

I believe that if an Irish Brigade were actually fighting on the Spanish Christian Front the Irish nation would rally behind it, and communism would never again raise its ugly head in Ireland. That is why I say that the fight against Communism in Ireland can be most effectively waged on the Spanish Front.³⁵

General O'Duffy contended that the thousands of applications he had received from all parts of Ireland were not from fool-hardy adventurers, but 'Priests, doctors, solicitors, teachers, farmers' sons, industrial workers, tradesmen, Army, Guards, etc.'. Informing the *Press*' readership of his decision to form a brigade, O'Duffy recalled the Flight of the Earls. The Irish Brigade would be stationed in an area 'where the Irish chieftains who were driven out of Ireland fought in other days'.³⁶

³³ *Irish Independent*, 26 August 1936.

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 28 August 1936.

³⁵ *Irish Press*, 29 August 1936.

³⁶ *Irish Press*, 29 August 1936.

Peadar O'Donnell - A Catalyst for Debate

Peadar O'Donnell, one of the founding members of the Republican Congress, was also an active letter-writer. He was a member of the IRA during the War of Independence and was imprisoned. O'Donnell's membership of the Republican Congress was in part influenced by the burgeoning Blueshirt movement in Ireland in 1934.³⁷ He was on holiday in Sitges, Catalonia when the civil war broke out. An avid writer, O'Donnell responded to the civil war with his pen. He never fought in the International Brigades in Spain, but took up an active letter-writing campaign and consistently addressed readers' questions. A clue to his devotion to letter-writing can be found in his book during this period, *Salud! An Irishman in Spain*. In his native Tírconaille, 'a man should live so as not to draw the eyes of the neighbours on him. But there is a touch of St. Peter in me. I get missions; ask any of the Irish bishops.'³⁸

Peadar O'Donnell's letters to the *Independent* were more nuanced than his letters published in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Press*. On 20 August O'Donnell cited the 1931 elections in Spain, and compared them to the 1918 elections in Ireland:

It appears that the miners went into the election of 1931 somewhat after the fashion of the Volunteers in the 1918 elections in Ireland. The Monarchists in Spain, like the Redmonites [sic] here, say there was intimidation...And dare I say this; that for all the burned churches the anti-Fascist masses in Catalonia are no more anti-God than Republicans in Ireland were in 1922-23.³⁹

³⁷ See Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*, p. 130.

³⁸ Peadar O'Donnell, *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (London: Methuen and Co, 1937), p. 8.

³⁹ *Irish Independent*, 20 August 1936.

The letter was indicative of the confusion that reigned over newspaper pages in August 1936 about the actual situation in Spain. The first letter of complaint was penned by 'JACKETS GREEN':

Sir-Allow me to protest against the letter in the *Irish Independent* in which O'Donnell, the Communist, compares the Church burning demons in Spain to our Irish boys of 1922. During the 1922 fight my brother lost his life, but he was giving his life for God and his country's freedom.⁴⁰

The letter continued:

In every other country the Communist is purely a Communist, in Ireland the Communist is taking advantage of the dispute between ourselves and England, and urging every extreme element in the country to discontent and ruffianism.

The letter concluded with a plea to President de Valera and William Cosgrave to act against the Communist menace before the next generation of Irishmen would either 'bend their knee before Christ or our altars, or before the carcass of Lenin in Moscow'. Clearly, the idea that the men of the War of Independence could be associated with the church-burning mobs in Spain was not to be tolerated.

A Spanish person who had until recently lived in Spain took umbrage with Peadar O'Donnell's article about the situation in the country. According to the reader O'Donnell did not come to Spain as an 'impartial witness'. He was there to excuse the atrocities committed by the anarchists and communists:

O'Donnell says that nothing has happened since to bring destruction on the churches except the Fascist rising. He attributed the destruction of the churches to this one cause. The fact is that numbers of churches were destroyed before the present patriotic rising, which is only partly Fascist. Carlo Sotelo, who was assassinated, read out in the Cortes a very large list of churches destroyed. From February 16th till April the

⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 22 August 1936.

1st 155 were burned. Yet the patriotic rising did not take place till July 19th.⁴¹

This letter by Guillermo Alvarez was significant because it was the only letter across the national publications by a Spaniard commenting on an Irishman's version of the situation in Spain.⁴² Alvarez took issue with Peadar O'Donnell and questioned his version of events and accused the republicans, anarchists and communists of burning the churches and killing the priests before any fascist forces were involved in the uprising. In a letter of 22 August, O'Donnell was critical of previous correspondence to the paper from Fr Stephen Brown:

But the gem of Father Brown's letter is his defence of the massacre of the workers of Badajoz by the Moors – I beg his pardon, the Foreign Legion was there, too. It was very impertinent of the *Irish Times* to show any concern over the "execution" of 2,000 people by Moorish firing-parties.

O'Donnell took issue with Brown's summation of the situation in Spain and his suggestion that O'Donnell read up on his history of massacres in Spain:

Look up the "Cambridge Modern History," says Father Brown, and you will see at page 471, vol. 1, a passage referring to the capture of Badajoz by the British Army during the Peninsular War. It reads: "Excesses far worse than those committed at Ciudad Rodrigo disgraced the storm; the troops got entirely out of hand and fell to plunder and rape and arson in a most desperate fashion." Now, if that does not silence the *Irish Times*!⁴³

Father Stephen Brown was an avid letter writer and a senior Jesuit in Milltown, Dublin. Brown was born in Co. Down but lived most of his life in Dublin and was ordained in 1914. He was an intellectual and was member of the Executive Board of the Library Association of Ireland, who vigorously

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 18 August 1936.

⁴² Guillermo Alvarez also wrote to the *Derry Journal* to complain about Peadar O'Donnell's claim to be an 'impartial witness' on 19 August 1936 and gave his address as St. Mary's, Tallaght, Dublin.

⁴³ *Irish Times*, 22 August 1936.

challenged, as he perceived it, the misinterpretation of the conflict in Spain. He insisted the issue of church-burning had been underplayed by the press, in particular the *Irish Times* during the initial weeks of the civil war. Indeed, in a letter on 29 August to the *Irish Independent*, he argues that if the choice in Spain was between Fascism and communism, 'Spanish Catholics would be perfectly entitled to choose the lesser of two evils to free themselves from intolerable wrongs'.⁴⁴ Brown's publication in 1937 *The Press in Ireland* criticised Irish newspapers notably the *Irish Times*, insisting that only the *Irish Independent* 'gave the Irish public the full facts about the persecution of the Church and the atrocities committed against priests and nuns'.⁴⁵

A number of readers' letters written to O'Donnell in late August to the *Times* were signed in Spanish, 'Queremos Saber' - we want to know. The Spanish sign-off was a catalyst for a flurry of correspondence between readers and O'Donnell on the civil war:

As a mere outside observer, with no particular knowledge of Spain other than derived from press reports, I should like to have some information on the following points before I can accept the view put forward in your leading article.

The letter concluded by quoting the *Irish Times*' closing sentence in its editorial:

In my opinion, you have unconsciously stated the true position when you say "in every country, and at every time when there has been a clash between religion and its attackers, its defenders have been the people." If this statement holds in the present instance, it would appear that the case resolves it into just what your leading article says it is not.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Irish Times*, 29 August 1936.

⁴⁵ Stephen Brown, *The Press in Ireland* (Dublin, 1937), p. 49. Quoted in McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 82.

⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, 20 August 1936.

The letter argued that the civil war was a genuine attempt by the people to overcome religion's attackers. As a result, another letter was penned by 'Queremos Saber', presumably the same person wrote to the *Times*, and again put questions to O'Donnell to clarify his position on the civil war:

5. If the forces ranged on the side of the Government are not Communistic, how does Mr. O'Donnell explain events such as the destruction of churches, the desecration of images, and the trampling on the Host in the streets? ⁴⁷

The destruction of churches in Spain struck a chord with the readership of *Times*. On 24 August, a letter inspired by 'Queremos Saber' was published but on this occasion the letter was signed in Latin, 'Sapere Aude' – 'dare to know'. The author, with 'no particular knowledge of Spain' structured the letter in the form of questions in keeping with 'Queremos Saber':

(5) There were attacks on churches prior to the rebellion, and, no doubt, they also were due to misguided men who used the name of Christianity to cloak their real ambitions. In my opinion, the fact that the people are not on the side of religion, but the standing Army led by an officer Junta proves this beyond all doubt.

O'Donnell attempted to address the letters directed at him by the two authors of 'Queremos Saber':

Sir, - "*Queremos Saber*" thinks that it would help the readers of the *Irish Times* to understand why the Spanish people do not take kindly to the missionary zeal of the Moors and the Foreign Legion if I would take my shadow off the light and answer a few questions about myself. For one thing, he says, people cannot settle down to study the Spanish question till they know once and for all whether I am a Communist!

⁴⁷ *Irish Times*, 24 August 1936.

O'Donnell was at pains to stress to his inquisitors that his information in his original observations came from the Spanish people and were not solely his own observations from Spain:

And he asks me why churches have been burned in Spain. Spanish workers told me that it was because of the *role* of the priests in politics there. The explanation is not complete. That is why I asked Father Alvarez to interpret for us this church-burning feature of Spanish politics for over the past hundred years.

The letter concluded with a message for the readership of the *Irish Times* that stressed that the conflict was between the landed class and the poor people of Spain.

But besides answering “Queremos Sabre,” may I add that the fight in Spain is a fight of the poor against the rich, of the people against the landlords, of a democratic Government against a military junta, and finally, of the Catholic masses against the Moors and the Foreign Legion?⁴⁸

The correspondence in the *Times* between readers and Peadar O'Donnell demonstrates a level of intrigue amongst the letter-writing public. Unquestionably, O'Donnell's persona was a catalyst for debate, but nonetheless the letters demonstrate a thirst for knowledge of the Spanish Civil War. O'Donnell stressed what he believed were the reasons that caused the conflict to start. Possibly, the letters' were part of an exercise in propaganda. His letters were in all the major daily newspapers, providing him with a high level of publicity.

O'Donnell wrote to the *Irish Press* stating that he did not approve of its coverage of the conflict and giving a first-hand experience of events in Spain.

⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 25 August 1936.

Their coverage, he claimed, was akin to the coverage offered by the *Daily Mail* in Britain:

Sir, -Your news of events in Spain is not, I am sure, deliberately selected to support the Fascist Terror there. But it would puzzle anybody reading your paper to say wherein your role differs from the openly Fascist "Daily Mail".

He stressed how important it was for the Irish public to understand the issues pertaining to the war in Spain, such as that of church burning and the wanton destruction of church property. O'Donnell explains that desecration only became 'possible' due to the intolerant and hierarchical position to which the church had elevated its self:

It is, unfortunately, quite true that churches have been burned in Spain by anti-Fascist forces. These burnings were only made possible, in full view of the Catholic masses of Spain by the fact that priests have been put into the position of being for the monarchy and against the Republic, for Fascism and against the people, until the churches came to be looked on as strongholds of reaction. Priests as well as laymen are saying so openly.

The letter concluded on a triumphalist note that the Republican forces would overcome the Fascist threat:

The Spanish government will smother the attempt of the Fascists because it is backed by the overwhelming mass of the Spanish people. And surely we owe it to our oldest friend among nations to be fair to the good name of a great people in an hour of trial.⁴⁹

There were numerous replies. P. Culligan, 'a plain simple man not very much interested in politics', took issue with O'Donnell's vocabulary:

In his letter he treats the affair [church burning] in a casual way, and refers to it as an unfortunate occurrence and that it was done by anti-fascists.
Is that the name he has for them? Doesn't he know that we of the Faith call these beings Satan's agents?

⁴⁹ *Irish Press*, 12 August 1936.

Isn't a church a place where Our Lord dwells? Who could think for any reason whatever of destroying such a place?

Clearly, O'Donnell's remarks on the burning of churches touched a chord with the readership of the *Press*. O'Donnell replied on 15 August:

I think Mr. Culligan should first of all remind himself that the present Government of Spain was elected by the Spanish people in February of this year and that under that Government Catholic Spain has thronged to Mass Sunday after Sunday, with as little let or hindrance as in Ireland.

The letter continued:

Cynics say church-burning is a very old Spanish custom. Fr. Coleman says churches were burned in Spain in 1909, so that we need not blame Russia nor Communism for Spain's habit in this. In fact, Fr. Coleman could give us a record of church-burning in Spain going back to the door-step of Philip II's reign.

Church-burning also featured in O'Donnell's letters to the *Times*. He stressed that church-burning was an established feature of Spanish history before the civil war. O'Donnell cited personal experience for his letter to the *Press*, one that was not included in his correspondence for other publications:

I saw a church being sacked. It was a hateful sight. The sacking was done by about a score of young people. The whole Catholic village looked on. Fishermen went on mending their nets. But when word came that the Fascists were advancing from Sarragossa, these same men rushed to erect barricades. I attribute the passivity in face of the church-burning to the part the priest plays in Fascist politics.⁵⁰

In the same edition O'Donnell was requested by a reader from London, Vincent Rochford, to clarify his position on democracy. Rochford suggested O'Donnell would be better suited to living and working in Germany than Ireland:

⁵⁰ *Irish Press*, 15 August 1936.

Is this Mr. O'Donnell's idea of "democracy"? If it is, then let him support Herr Hitler in Germany and Lord Craigavon in Belfast. One imagines it is not a "democracy" which would commend itself to the Irish people.⁵¹

Another reply, this time from a Belfast resident, Padraig MacGiolla, argued that O'Donnell was advocating communist propaganda:

Mr O'Donnell's communistic propaganda is like a rat running round a barn – it is easy to see it, but not so easy to kill with a stick. He refers to the "Fascist Terror" in Spain, knowing full well, that before the revolution broke out, reliable reports from Spain told us of the daily expulsion of nuns and priests from their convents and churches; of the secularisation of Catholic colleges; of the murder of Catholic laymen, workers as well as bourgeois, and all this occurred under the patronage of that liberty-loving and democratic government which exists in Spain.

The letter argued that the insurgency was far broader in its composition than O'Donnell was allowing for:

There is one thing we are sure of and that is, the majority of the rebels are bourgeois Catholics and Catholic workers, and they have the sympathy of Catholic Ireland, because they are fighting for a great cause – the soul of Spain – the traditional Catholic Spain that we honour; and I say this knowing that Royalists, Fascist and Moslem Moors are fighting with the rebels. I agree with Mr O'Donnell that it is not a fight between Communism and Capitalism. It is a fight between Christianity and Communism.⁵²

The theme of a shared history or an affinity with Catholic Spain was continued by C.K. Kirwan on 21 August who argued for the creation of a fund to help Ireland's 'persecuted brethren in Spain'. Quoting the *Catholic Times*, Kirwan stated that many Irish people are 'sickened by the atrocities of the Reds in Spain, are anxious to help the Catholic victims of the terror'. The history of Britain and Ireland is given as a reason to 'send immediately a generous subscription' to the fund:

⁵¹ *Irish Press*, 15 August 1936.

⁵² *Irish Press*, 18 August 1936.

When the Catholics of England, Ireland and Scotland were being persecuted unto death, Catholic Spain played a great part in preventing the light of Faith from being extinguished in these islands. Now is the time for the Catholics of these islands to help their persecuted brethren in Spain.⁵³

Irish history dominated a reply from Máire Ní Nualláin who argued that the Irish people had stood up against injustices throughout their history and would stand by Spain during the civil war. Communism would find no sanctuary in Irish hearts and the Republican government in Spain was not fighting a 'just' cause:

If Mr. O'Donnell thinks he can gull the Irish people into believing that the ruthless Government of Spain is fighting a just fight he is sadly mistaken, for the Irish people have stood out against injustice since time immemorial and the awful injustices that those miserable creatures of the communistic instinct have committed can never find any sympathy in Irish hearts.⁵⁴

Ní Nualláin was clear. O'Donnell had attempted to 'gull' the Irish people into believing Communism and its 'miserable creatures.' The *Press* continued to receive replies to O'Donnell's letter until late in August. The last reply to be published was authored by a J. Fohrmeister. The letter warns civil and religious leaders in Ireland against complacency and communism. It stated that there is a need to address inequality if communism was to be prevented from taking a hold in Ireland because it was a 'ripe field' for Russia:

If Russia finds this country a ripe field for the cultivation of its insidious doctrines, then the causes must be removed without delay. Filled Churches are no indication that Communism will never succeed in Ireland.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Irish Press*, 21 August 1936.

⁵⁴ *Irish Press*, 22 August 1936.

⁵⁵ *Irish Press*, 27 August 1936.

Wariness of British Imperialism

Unlike the sermon-like denunciations in the *Independent*, the first letter in the *Irish Times* to discuss the outbreak of the civil war came on 18 August, and claimed the 'atrocities' campaign would deceive few. The author, George Lennon, an O/C of the West Waterford flying column during the War of Independence who had just returned from the United States, argued that the Catholic Church had suffered a 'heavy blow' not because it was Catholic but because the clergy had 'thrown in their lot with the powerful, the monied, the privileged, and turned a deaf ear to the just demands of the toiling masses'. The letter criticised the British press for its 'propagandist reports' and suggested the real situation in Spain was not being reported:

Sir, - There has been such confusion created in the minds of the Irish people by the propagandists reports in the British daily press and its Irish equivalents, on the situation in Spain that it seems of some importance to restate the actual position. The war between the 'Reds' and the 'Patriots' is in reality a Fascist revolt against a lawfully elected democratic Government

Lennon said that the same propagandist techniques were being used in the Spanish Civil War that had first surfaced during the Great War.

The atrocities campaign has, unfortunately for the propagandists, come so soon after the similar campaign in the Great War, that it is not likely to deceive many. Indeed, as one opens the newspaper each morning one involuntarily looks for the resurrection of the story of boiling down the corpses to make candles.⁵⁶

The 'boiling down' of the corpses referred to the widely-held belief during the First World War that Germany had begun to run low on fat to produce candles and other products due to the British blockade. The rumour was the product

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 18 August 1936.

of 'invention of a diabolical propagandist; it was a popular folktale, an 'urban myth', which had been circulated for months before it received any official notice'.⁵⁷

Responding to an editorial on Spain, the readers of the *Irish Times* appeared to be divided in their reaction to it. Some welcomed the piece and called for the *Times*' objective reporting to continue. Others objected in the fiercest language, condemning the *Times*' comparisons to Ireland's history and British conduct in the Peninsular Wars. For Rev. Stephen J. Brown the real issue in the Spanish conflict was obvious:

Blinded by religious or class prejudice, no reasonable men can doubt that the real issue there is Communism *versus* Christianity, as it is in Mexico to-day. It would be amazing to find a Christian paper taking the Communist side had not sad experience taught us Catholics in these countries and in the United States that persecution suffered by Catholicism evokes no sympathy, and its cause receives no fair hearing in certain quarters.

To justify the insurgents' actions at Badajoz, Brown argued that, unlike the British who sacked the city, the 'rebels' were responding to recent atrocities perpetrated by the Republican forces, which were still fresh in their minds. The letter makes reference to a massacre which took place in 1812 during the Peninsular War when an estimated 4,000 civilians were killed by British forces in retaliation for the city's resistance:

Excesses far worse than those committed at Ciudad Rodrigo disgraced the storm [of Badajoz]; the troops got entirely out of hand, and fell to plunder, rape, and arson in the most desperate fashion. It was three days before they could be restored to discipline.

⁵⁷ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War. British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 57.

The inclusion of a reference to a Napoleonic battle in the 19th Century in a letter concerned with the coverage of the Spanish Civil War in the *Times* is intriguing. Brown attempted to justify Nationalist atrocities:

Yet these British troops had not fresh in their memories unspeakable outrages committed on defenceless men and women, whose only crime was their religion, and many massacres of surrendered insurgents.⁵⁸

Fr Brown received a reply on 24 August:

Sir, - Ireland is a country which has always been noted for its love of liberty, and has always shown itself ready to resist armed dictatorship in any form. The attitude of a section of the Irish public, as exemplified by the Rev. S J. Brown, in the *Irish Times* of August 21st is, therefore, as surprising as it is deplorable.

The two letters drew example from Ireland's colonial past to deliver their arguments. Clearly, the letter by M.C. Griffith, B.Litt and R.F. Griffith, B.Sc are ideologically poles apart from Brown, yet both pursued their arguments through the narrative of religion, history and colonialism. The two authors answer Brown's request for proof by referencing his own letter and citing his arguments as an example of how the debate raging about the Spanish War could become over-heated and distorted:

Your correspondent appears sceptical of the Government's claim to represent the people, and asks for proof "that the 'plain people of Spain' have risen in defence of the so-called Government." Leaving aside the defeat inflicted on the rebels by an army consisting mainly of Asturian miners, we can answer his question by a quotation from his own letter.... "The Government proceeded to arm the mob and an appalling orgy of murder and destruction began". In plain language this means "the Government issued arms to the people, who then proceeded to defend themselves against the rebels." Would any Government in its senses issue arms to the people if it were not fully confident of their whole-hearted support?

⁵⁸ *Irish Times* 21 August 1936.

The letter ended with a plea by the two authors for the *Times* to continue with its 'impartiality' during the conflict:

It is surprising that anyone should take exception to the article referred to, an article which treated the Spanish situation with extraordinary fairness and sanity. It is to be hoped that Father Brown's one-sided view of the situation will not cause the *Irish Times* to abandon an impartiality which is all too rare in the present crisis.⁵⁹

Comparing the events in Spain to contemporaneous events in Irish history was the subject of a letter by J.F. Moriarty, who compared the *Times*' coverage of revolt in Spain to the British officers' revolt at the Curragh in 1914. The Curragh Mutiny took place on 20 March 1914 during the third Home Rule Bill when British Army officers said they would resign their commissions if ordered to suppress the Ulster Volunteer Force:

You have certainly moved with the *Times*. I cannot help comparing your attitude towards the officers' revolt in Spain in 1936 with your attitude towards the British officers' revolt at the Curragh in 1914. In your leading article of the 24th March, 1914, you say: "The military crisis is ended, but the results will be far-reaching. The officers who tendered their resignations have won the day."⁶⁰

Ambrose V. Martin, a Fianna Fáil activist and director of a company which traded with Republican Spain, claimed that the British press had misled the Irish public throughout the centuries, as well as during the First World War:

There seems to be an organized attempt to prejudice the Irish people on one side or another, and we hear of people talking of armed brigades, of cutting off trade relations, etc., etc., with Spain
What is the meaning of all this? Is it an attempt by the British news-agencies to stir up the minds of the Irish people and have them ready to become cannon fodder again in a European War? Most of your readers will remember the terrible atrocities against Catholic priests which were supposed to be perpetrated by the Germans in Belgium. Thousands upon thousands of Irish bones have rotted away in the

⁵⁹ *Irish Times*, 24 August 1936.

⁶⁰ *Irish Times*, 24 August 1936.

battle fields of Europe, because they believed that there was not a priest, a nun, or a bishop left alive in Catholic Belgium.

Martin suggests that the press rarely revisit an issue to prove whether claims made pre-conflict were indeed correct. The letter took a more sinister and cynical approach that suggested the attempt to persuade the Irish people was more to do with Irish people laying down their lives than the real conflict at hand:

Was there ever an attempt when the war was over to prove whether those terrible atrocities were committed by the Germans or not, or was it the mission of the British News-agencies finished as soon as they got the poor unfortunate Irish people to lay down their lives? The irony of it all was that the Irish people were fighting a Catholic nation at the services of a non-Catholic one.

Martin cited Ireland's perceived servitude to the British establishment during the First World War as a valid reason to be sceptical of British news agencies' version of events in Spain. His letter then took a more conciliatory approach and stressed the need for more humanity and religion and less clamour for reprisals or revenge:

I sincerely believe that if the Irish people are interested in saving the churches from being burned in Spain, that more effect could be had by an Irish missionary standing with his hands open appealing in the name of God and Christianity, in front of the doors of the church, than General O'Duffy at the head of a firing squad, side by side with those of the Foreign Legion and the savage Mahommedan Riff tribes.⁶¹

In his view, religion and understanding could heal Spain's divisions – not soldiers from Ireland. Martin concluded that there was a need for more religion and understanding in the conflict and less violence by both sides. For J. Fohrmeister, the full churches at Mass were a sign of complacency, and

⁶¹ *Irish Press*, 24 August 1936.

‘unscrupulous propaganda’ would destroy ‘faith and religious practice’. The letter spelt out to the readers of the *Press* the fact that they had been let down by religious and political leaders in Ireland:

In Ireland, unfortunately, the Church and State have reason to reproach themselves. The former with regard to instruction, and the latter with regard to the toleration of an economic system that denies to so many of our people the means of maintaining a standard of living in keeping with Christian principles.

Indeed, the proletariat in Ireland were not being catered for in the political system and the result could be the rise of communism. Unless political and religious leaders addressed the inequalities of Irish society they would be faced with the same kinds of problems that had erupted in Spain in 1936. The letter foreshadowed attempts by the Christian Front to mobilise the public and to be wary of communism in any guise. The power in Ireland, like Spain, was with the ordinary people. Ireland could suffer the same fate and fall ‘beneath its influence’ and strong communist ‘tentacles’.⁶²

The last day of August saw the publication of a letter by S.Ó Luinn, who reiterated the message from the previous day’s publication. The letter argued that the very circumstances that enveloped Spain in violence and war were present in Ireland. Ireland should ‘think twice’ before interfering in Spain because ‘a war is a war and wars are not fought with kid gloves’ The masses had risen in Spain, and as they could in Ireland also:

The masses of Catholic workers (in Spain), as intensely Catholic as the Catholic workers of Ireland, ran riot. It could have happened under similar circumstances in Ireland. It remains for the Catholic population of Ireland, the Catholic Hierarchy and one of the sanest Governments in Europe to see that it doesn’t happen.

⁶² *Irish Press*, 27 August 1936.

The readers of the *Press* were told of the menace of communism and the need to be alert to its dangers but warned the public that ‘we haven’t got one word of truth from Irish newspapers regarding the situation in Spain’.⁶³

Conclusion

The popular press in Ireland during the first full month’s coverage of the civil war published readers’ letters that were emotive, religious, pro-Fascist and anti-communist. The newspapers ideologies in the case of the *Irish Times* and *Irish Press* were not overtly present in the readers’ letters pages. There were letters that praised the neutrality of the *Times*, and this was indeed a key principle of its editor, Robert Smyllie. The *Irish Independent* actively supported Fine Gael and published letters that supported its view that Catholicism was under threat and that Franco should be supported. Indeed, the paper stated to its readers that they would refuse to publish ‘attacks on the Catholic Church and on Catholic priests’ and singled out readers who were not clearly stating their name and address even to the extent that they printed the town in which the letter was posted if the author did not include his or her address.⁶⁴ The de Valera backed *Irish Press* did not publish any letters that criticised the government’s adherence to the non-intervention treaty. Some readers’ letters demanded that Ireland stand by her Spanish neighbour at a time when Catholicism was under threat from a communist regime, whereas others supported the democratically elected Spanish Republican government.

⁶³ *Irish Press*, 29 August 1936.

⁶⁴ See *Irish Independent* 18 August 1936 & *Irish Times* 18 August 1936.

The *Independent* published letters that supported and praised the creation of the Irish Brigade and argued that Christianity was under threat from communism in all its guises. The more neutral *Times* printed both positive and negative comments about its coverage, including charges of hypocrisy by the paper over the Curragh Mutiny. The *Press* weaved a careful line with its readers' letters and published letters in all subject areas. There was a stark contrast between the coverage in the *Independent* and the *Times* in August 1936, when the civil war and Ireland's participation on both sides was in its infancy. However, it was the sense that Irishmen and Irish women knew the hurt that Spain was enduring that permeated the letters' pages. Arguably, the Irish had known what it was like to feel injustice and disenfranchisement at the hands of the British and felt a kinship towards Spain. The letters were overtly anti-British and provided a platform in which readers' views and feelings on Spain could be articulated through a sense of shared history.

Letters from readers criticised the Republican government in Spain with particular emphasis on church burnings and its reliance on the Soviet Union. The issue of a communist take-over in Ireland was repeatedly debated by readers. There was a genuine fear that Ireland could become the next Spain. There were genuine knowledge-seekers who stressed the need for more information about the conflict and suggested that neither the Irish or British press were presenting a clear or balanced view on the conflict. General O'Duffy's idea to form an Irish Brigade featured strongly in the readers' correspondence that provided a platform for men to pledge themselves to fight for Catholicism in Spain.

Peadar O'Donnell's letters were a catalyst for reader interactions. His views more often than not conflicted with the general public's and were expressed in the readers' letters pages. O'Donnell called on his own personal experience of Spain, but also on the anecdotal evidence from Spanish fisherman and workers he had met during his time in Sitges and Barcelona. His clashes with readers resulted in demands for him to explain his thoughts on 'democracy' and make clear whether if he indeed supported the Spanish Republic's actions. Furthermore, O'Donnell argued that parallels existed between Spanish miners and Irish Volunteers in the 1918 and 1931 elections.

A sense of kinship with Catholic Spain against oppressing forces was touched on by all the three papers. The *Times* readers' letters pages were concerned with the role the UK had played in Irish and Spanish history. The massacre at Badajoz was cited in numerous readers' letters but the letter by Father Brown actually attempted to justify Nationalist atrocities during the conflict by arguing that the soldiers were motivated by recent attacks by Republican soldiers.

It was not only Spain's relationship with Britain during the Peninsular War that was called into question, but also the coverage of it by the *Times*. The coverage devoted to the Curragh Munity of 1914 was cited as an example of *Times*' hypocrisy during the conflict. The *Times*' accepted the Spanish Republic's version of events in 1936 but not the British government's account in 1914. Readers' suggested that the French revolution should be taken as a warning from history that could be applied to the Spanish Civil War, particularly in light of the call by the *Times*' and O'Duffy to send an Irish brigade to Spain. France had sent troops to America to aid in the fight against the British but

suffered a revolution, according to the letter-writer who was inspired by those very soldiers' experiences of the American Revolution.

The readers' letters pages in August 1936 demonstrated the high level of articulation and sympathy the Irish people had for Spain at the outbreak of the civil war. The letters demonstrate an affinity between Ireland and Spain, not just in 1936 but also throughout the centuries. The narrative within the letters adds an additional layer to the historiography that underpins the theory that Ireland's coverage of the civil war subsumed Spanish events into a 'domestic, cultural-political discourse'.⁶⁵ The letters provide evidence that the newspaper-reading Irish public engaged with Spain and viewed the war through the prism of colonialism and a shared sense of Catholicism, as well as part of the broad spectrum of fast-moving political activity in Europe in the 1930s.

⁶⁵ Fearghal McGarry, 'Irish newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', *Irish Historical Studies*, 33, no. 129 (2002), p. 90.

Chapter Five

Student Publications, Professors and the Spanish Civil War

‘May the Lord save us from our universities and protect us from our professors.’¹

The conflict in Spain was reported in student newspapers across Ireland and debates surrounding the conflict demonstrated an acute awareness of the political situation and propaganda in Ireland. There was a noticeable difference between the newspaper reportage and the perceptions of the conflict by student writers in the magazines. On rare occasions student debates and controversies were published in the national press including the *Irish Times* and the *Cork Examiner*. Indeed, university lecturers frequently appeared in the press and periodicals offering their views on the conflict. This chapter examines the *National Student* (University College, Dublin), the *Quarryman* (University College, Cork), *T.C.D. A College Miscellany* (Trinity College), *Pro Tanto Quid* (Queens University) and the *New Northman* (Queens University). There are few secondary sources available on student publications from this period, which do not offer any detailed analysis on events associated with the Spanish Civil War.² What literature that does exist has mainly focused on the student campaigns of the second half of the twentieth century including protests against the apartheid system in South Africa and the establishment of the Dublin Simon Community by Trinity

¹ P. Murphy *Cork Examiner*, 16 October 1936.

² Jodi Burkett, ed., ‘Universities and Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland’, in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1–12, p. 5. What literature that does exist mainly is focused on the United Kingdom’s universities. Very little has been researched in Ireland.

College and University College Dublin students in 1969. This chapter will argue that Irish students, unlike their fellow students in Europe and the United States (US), were not interested in the conflict, despite the outpouring of propaganda from both sides in Ireland during the Spanish Civil War.³

Irish universities and activism in the 1930s

Student activism in Ireland with regards to the Spanish Civil War was rare. There were no mass demonstrations in Dublin, Belfast, Cork or Galway. There was no outpouring of support for either Franco or the Spanish Republic. There were very few students in the 1930s and the majority came from affluent backgrounds. There existed, briefly, an organisation called the Student Vanguard, a coming together of University College Dublin and Trinity College students opposed to Fascism. The Student Vanguard, established by Charles Donnelly, and included Frank Ryan and Owen Sheehy Skeffington and was founded in response to the Student Christian Movement and the Pro Fide organisation having control of the Student Representative Council.⁴ The Student Vanguard's primary aim was to stem the flow of the Blueshirt movement in Irish universities.⁵ There were physical altercations between the two groups, resulting in headlines such as 'College Students in Scene. Blueshirts in scuffle in Dublin Hall', according to Donagh MacDonagh. The Blueshirts were escorted out by Ryan with 'their knuckle dusters' up and

³ There were student protests in both Spain and Portugal during the 1930s against dictatorships. See: *Irish Times*, 30 April 1931.

⁴ *Irish Press*, 12 May 1934.

⁵ Steven Conlon, 'Rebels and Rustici: Students and the Formation of the Irish State', in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*, ed. Jodi Burkett (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), p. 266-268. See also: Sam McGrath, *UCD & The Spanish Civil War* <https://ucdhiddenhistory.wordpress.com/2009/11/29/ucd-the-spanish-civil-war/> (accessed 31 October 2017)

Donnelly 'took control of things'.⁶ Both Ryan and Sheehy Skeffington were active anti-Fascists. Little has been written on the Student Vanguard, though the establishment of the group does indicate the presence of an active body of students who were willing to actively protest in the 1930s.

Few students in Ireland became politically active during the period, but this was not the case in Britain. Eric Hobsbawm said of his student days at Cambridge that friends of his were regularly volunteering to fight for the International Brigades and 'we were inspired by the specific example of those who went to fight in Spain'. Indeed, Tom Buchanan has argued that Spain 'intersected powerfully with the growing alarm and political mobilization of British intellectuals in response to the rise of Fascism and the disintegration of the international order'.⁷ There were university groupings such as the University Labour Federation, University Liberals and a London University Ambulance Unit.⁸ Georgina Brewis argued that British students were far more inspired by events in Spain than other contemporary crises, including the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937.⁹ Student activism in the United States was not widespread but in the state of Michigan, the Progressive Club was particularly active, a local chapter of the American Student Union, who organised political rallies and campaigns. The group raised funds and purchased an ambulance for Republican forces, as well as the Student Senate of the club passing a

⁶ *Irish Times*, 15 March 1941.

⁷ Buchanan, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 150.

⁸ 'Irish Medics in the SCW' *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War* <http://irelandscw.com/docs-Medics.htm> (accessed October 2, 2017), 'Medical Services' *XV International Brigade in Spain*

<http://internationalbrigadesinspain.weebly.com/medical-services.html> (accessed 3 October, 2017).

⁹ Georgina Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880--1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014) p. 110.

resolution urging Congress to lift an arms embargo on Spain. Some members of the group volunteered to fight for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.¹⁰ Howard University in Washington D.C. saw protests over the Spanish Civil War by club members.

Dublin

Students at both Trinity College and UCD had protested in the 1919 and 1945. The first anniversary of the Armistice in 1919 ended in a riot when UCD students attacked Trinity students who were holding a minute's silence. UCD students walked through College Green singing *The Soldier's Song* to which they were met with *God Save the King*. Running battles between the police and UCD students took place for the rest of the day. On VE Day in 1945 the Union flag, the French Tricolour and the Soviet flag were raised above College Green. Later, the Irish tricolour appeared. The future Taoiseach, Charles J. Haughey, was said to have burnt the Union flag.¹¹ Protests and counter protests erupted again with the Gardaí intervening to restore calm. Indeed, UCD had seen both Charles Donnelly and Frank Ryan pass through its doors.¹² The former failed his exams and left to fight in the International Brigades in December 1936. He was described to Donagh MacDonagh as a man who was a dangerous red and 'had queer ideas' and who 'hasn't read

¹⁰ Juli Highfill 'Standing with Spain: Michigan Students and the Spanish Civil War' *The Volunteer* <http://www.albavolunteer.org/2017/06/standing-with-spain-michigan-students-and-the-spanish-civil-war/> (accessed July 12, 2017)

¹¹ *Irish Times*, 8 May 1945 See also: Fergus O'Farrell 'Trinity V. UCD' *History Ireland*, Vol.23, No.4, July/August (2015), p. 48-49.

¹² See Introduction for biographical details of Ryan and Donnelly.

half the books he quotes'.¹³ The institution had a Republican club on campus and allowed the publication of an Irish language journal called *An Giorrghiodh* in which Ryan had a column, *Píobaire an Bhrianaigh*. UCD and Trinity were not strangers to revolutionary ideas or students.

Basque priest Ramón Laborda had featured heavily in the Irish press after his arrival in January 1937.¹⁴ His subsequent media performances ensured lengthy debates across the column inches in readers' letters pages.¹⁵ Published by the UCD students' union, the *National Student* invited Father Laborda to write an article outlining the Basque situation to help explain 'this terrible war which is at present ravaging the Iberian peninsular'. The publication of Laborda's article entitled 'Rebellion in Spain and the Basque Country' reiterated that the Basque people backed the elected Republican government:

As *Catholics*, the Basques put themselves on the side of the legitimately constituted government. Besides, there existed at this time a 'Collective Pastoral Letter' from the Spanish Episcopacy, which condemn all violence against the Republican government...His Eminence, the Cardinal Primate of Spain, has just published a leaflet, 'The Case of Spain.' Which reads on p7, line 30: 'We do not know how and for what objects this military insurrection of the 18th July was undertaken. We *suppose* that the motives were of the highest'.¹⁶

He highlighted that the Catholic Church was not involved in the planning of the insurrection by Franco and it was a 'coincidence that the Basque Nationalists and the Communists find themselves in the same camp'. The 'Fascist' newspapers in Europe had misreported Basque priests taking up arms alongside the insurgents:

¹³ *Irish Times*, 15 March 1941.

¹⁴ Shovlin, *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923-1958*, p. 84.

¹⁵ See chapter seven for more in-depth analysis on Father Laborda.

¹⁶ *The National Student*, January 1937.

Many Fascist newspapers of Europe have said that several Basque priests have taken up arms against the insurgents. This is an absolute calumny. None of these newspapers has so far quoted the name of a single priest or monk who has taken up arms against the insurgents. On the other hand, the insurgents have obliged a great many priests and Religious to fight. This is the truthful position of affairs in our country of Euzkadi, and of the things that are happening.¹⁷

Ireland's history compelled it to be sympathetic to the Basques 'whose history shows so many close parallels with Irish history, and which is now fighting as Ireland has done for its freedom from an alien race, let us hope for the happiness of both in their longed-for liberty.'¹⁸

The February edition, which was reviewed in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent*, included an article by Jose Maria Semprun 'An Appeal from Spanish Catholics to Catholics of the Entire World' translated from French. The article argued about the bombing of Madrid that it 'is beyond any human being to describe this scene of terrible desolation!', caused outrage.¹⁹ Complaints focused on whether free speech was being abused and a motion by Mr Tom O'Higgins from the Literary and Historical Society, who would later become a Fine Gael TD and barrister, argued that the articles took a subjective viewpoint 'in the expression of opinion on the present war in Spain'. The motion was supported by a 'substantial majority' of participants who were 'condemning the attitude of the 'National Student' regarding the Spanish struggle'.²⁰

In the March edition of the *National Student*, Fr Francis Shaw, Professor of Early and Medieval Irish at UCD responded and described the Laborda's article as 'not wholly satisfying', arguing that the priest had

¹⁷ *The National Student*, January 1937.

¹⁸ *The National Student*, January 1937.

¹⁹ *The National Student*, February 1937

²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 2 March 1937.

presented Irish readers with two different versions of events. In the *National Student* Laborda made the point that Basque priests were free to do as they pleased as they had not received guidance from the Bishops, whereas the *Irish Press* reported that Basque Priests ignored the 'partisan utterances' from the Bishops. He highlighted the perceived inconsistencies, as he saw it, in Laborda's piece. Shaw drew attention to Laborda's tactic of appealing to Catholic students and questioned whether, if faced with the same situation in Ireland, they would 'sacrifice its spiritual soul to save its national liberty?'. He was referring to Laborda's assertion that it was a 'coincidence' that Basque nationalists were aligned with the communists:

Father Laborda wishes to win our sympathy for the Basques. But if we accept the "facts" he adduces in their favour, we must also admit (1) that by now there can be no Basques left except "Fascists" one, and (2) that, as the Patriot army on the Vizcaya front is mainly composed of Carlist Navarrese Basques, the disgraceful atrocities, which he alleges but does not substantiate, are to be laid to the account of his own fellow-country-men.²¹

By May, the *Irish Times* reported on a special meeting of the Student Council which dissociated itself from the magazine and called for the resignation of the editor, Mr. T. Hughes. However, due to the 'peculiar constitution of the magazine', Mr Hughes remained in charge. The piece noted that the articles published in February did not cause any 'great exception' but 'it was felt that not alone had an unfair bias been given to the 'make up' of the magazine, but also opponents were not being allowed the liberty of fair discussion'.²²

In the spring of 1938 Shaw questioned the editorial decision-making of Thomas Hughes during 1936-37 at *The National Student*. He commented that

²¹ *National Student*, March 1937.

²² *Irish Times*, 10 May 1937

'why the article by Father Laborda should ever have appeared in the *National Student* it is not easy to see'. *The National Student* 'was sold at the customary price of threepence. Anti - "Fascist" and Rationalist propaganda in its cruder forms is usually given away free'. In concluding, Shaw had a message for the university and magazine staff:

The *National Student* should play an important part in guarding the good name of the College; to this the students have a right. I submit, then, that if this journal chooses to give information on so serious a matter as the present struggle in Spain, the information which it imparts should not be worthless, false or out-of-date; moreover, misspellings of foreign names and at least elementary errors in geography should be avoided.²³

The largely forgotten archives of *T.C.D. Miscellany*, established in 1895, demonstrate the low level of engagement amongst students at Trinity. There was a level of fear of communism and a suspicion of the creation of socialist club at the university. There were no strong reactions to the publication's reports because there were none of significance. The small collection of columns, articles and letters, helped to provide the context in which *T.C.D. Miscellany* reported the conflict. There was a humorous side to the conflict in the pages of *T.C.D. Miscellany*. Poems mocking General Franco were printed as well as a satirical take on Irish reportage.

During the battle for Madrid in the autumn and winter of 1936 Irish newspapers published daily accounts of the battles, often with conflicting accounts of the conflict. *T.C.D. College Miscellany* mocked the newspapers' coverage and called into question what the papers understood about the strife. The battles around Madrid were of no real interest to the magazine. *T.C.D.*

²³ *National Student*, March 1938.

Miscellany was more interested in highlighting the newspapers partisanship towards each side. The *Irish Independent* need only 'have a rough (only a very rough) idea of the geography of Spain [and could] Have all Government Atrocities at your fingertips.' The *Irish Times* needed to realise 'how little there is in life. Suffer from biliousness and melancholia. Believe in Utopian Idealism three days a week, and Machiavellian Realism the other three. Have a propensity for sitting on the fence' and 'delight in big ideas and small sales'. For Éamon de Valera's *Irish Press*, they were expected to 'understand the new constitution. Admire Dan O'Mahoney. Realise that women who thought as you did in 1922 are wrong to hold the same views to-day.'²⁴ The column was signed 'Holofernes', the invading general sent to take vengeance on the west by Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Judith in the Old Testament. Societal pages and readers' letters made reference to the Spanish Civil War during the first year of conflict. A letter signed 'Pro Bono Publico' – for the public good - argued that Trinity should not allow the creation of a socialist club:

I note with alarm and despondency that the Bolshevik is, so to speak, at our gates. With England already in a bad enough way, with sentimental pacifism everywhere, we cannot afford to tolerate a Socialist Club in the University. Let us hope that the Board will have the sense to strangle the budding serpent of Communism before the red hordes are at our gates, and this, the last citadel of Sanity in Europe, capitulates to the Muscovite Menace

Pro Bono Publico.²⁵

The society pages were dominated by university issues and occasionally contained details of debates from the College Historical Society. Peadar O'Donnell was due to take the place of Lord French at a debate and it 'was a

²⁴ T.C.D. *A College Miscellany*, 19 November 1936.

²⁵ T.C.D *A College Miscellany*, 5 November 1937.

little ironical that Mr. Peadar O'Donnell should have been taking Lord ffrench's place'. Lord ffrench was a graduate of Trinity where he studied philosophy.²⁶ The contrast with O'Donnell was stark but was 'greeted with enthusiasm' and he delivered a speech that contrasted with the earlier speaker, Sir Arnold Wilson, who 'had almost seemed Fascist'.

Mr. O'Donnell is a Communist, albeit a mild one for the evening. His remarks on Article 2A of the Constitution were very much to the point; the sincerity of his feeling about Spain for instance, is obvious. But he has the ability to make what we might call the "sneer indirect," which is typical and dangerous.²⁷

The fact that O'Donnell was invited indicates that the society was open to dissenting views on the conflict in Spain. During the battle for Madrid in October and November 1936, Irish newspapers published accounts of the war that contrasted with each other depending on which news agency copy was used. Daily reports of the battle stood side-by-side on the newsstand with conflicting news of the Republican defence or Nationalist advance on the capital.²⁸ *T.C.D. Miscellany* produced a satirical piece that mocked the reports in Irish newspapers which appeared under the College Historical Society page. The articles were devoid of facts and were 'appended' for an Irish audience. General 'Preston' led the rebels and a Mr W.R.C. Parke's ambulance unit was destroyed:

On Wednesday, 17th, fighting in the Spanish Civil War shifted to the G.M.B Zone. We append reports which, had certain of our contemporaries had access to the facts, might have appeared in their columns.)

Irish Times

Heavy Fighting in Spain.

²⁶ Richard Davenport-Hines, 'ffrench, Charles Austin Thomas Robert John Joseph, sixth Baron ffrench (1868–1955)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46993>, accessed 12 Sept 2017]

²⁷ *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 12 November 1936.

²⁸ See chapter 1 for more details on the battle for Madrid.

Both Sides Claim Victory

...Heavy losses are reported amongst the rebels led by General Prestone the Catholic commander-in-chief, who reports the bombing of Mr. W.R.C. PARKES'S ambulance unit.

In the *Independent*, Moscow's hand was evident in the conflict and was the overarching influence in the war:

Reds Bomb Ambulance Unit The Hidden Hand of Moscow

It is stated on reliable authority that the planes responsible for the air attack on the Patriot ambulance unit were manned by Red pilots of the notorious Soviet Hanson squadron. The Squadron is led by two mysterious brothers whose infamous deeds have led to their becoming the bogey-men of Spanish children. They are a familiar figure in towns and villages where they openly flaunt their Bolshevik emblems.²⁹

The article highlighted the level of misreporting and how partisan Irish reportage had been in the first six months of the conflict. The fictional squadron names and good Catholic leaders of the insurgency highlighted how predictable the stories had become in the national press. 'Spanish Jig-Saw', a piece of verse by Elyot Knight made the point that both sides emphasised what they were against rather than what they were for:

The Spanish Civil War is a thing I abhor;
Admittedly I've learnt a lot I didn't know before;
From Gibraltar to Madrid
I know everything they did,
I've read up the atrocities and wallowed in the gore,
And every second day I have seen the papers say
That the peace of Europe's threatened and it must give way;
And I don't want to hear no more.

On every party floor there's a speaker on the war;
(If I've heard a single speech I must have heard a score.)
They all of them decide
We must fight for either side,
But they all of them agree in a fierce pugnacity,
And whether Red or Rebel doesn't worry me;
I don't want to hear no more.

²⁹ T.C.D A College Miscellany, 19 November 1936.

And the Communists deplore the Moorish Foreign Corps,
 While Franco claims his only aims are merely to restore.
 But be they Red or White,
 There's a tendency to fight,
 Despite Non-Intervention, and Genevan Law.
 And I think I understand everything that comes to hand,
 And all the petty incidents by sea and air and land.
 But tell me one thing more-
 What are they fighting *for*?³⁰

The poem also points to an issue rarely noted: that some in Ireland were becoming fed up hearing about the Spanish Civil War. Newspapers columns were filled daily with news of atrocities - as Knight described it he 'wallowed in the gore' and 'on every floor there's a speaker on the war'. Rarely in *T.C.D. Miscellany* did the editor refer to the Spanish conflict. However, in February 1937 an editorial was published that was anti-communist in its message and one that highlighted the hypocrisy of 'intellectual weeklies' who did not 'hesitate to wear a flaming red tie'.

How silly are those people who wax very indignant about Mosely wearing a "provocative" uniform but who do not hesitate to wear a flaming red tie. The same sort of people (they take their views from the "pink" intellectual weeklies) were horrified if one called the Abyssinians "blacks" and had much to say about Ethiopian civilizations, etc., but they did not hesitate to call the Moors "blacks" when they were fighting on the Anti-Red side in Spain.³¹

A former editor of the *T.C.D. Miscellany*, Rev. R.M. Hilliard, was killed whilst fighting with the International Brigades. A letter written by Hilliard was published in the May edition in 1937. Hilliard led an eventful life and was a committed communist, Trinity College graduate, evangelical Christian and bantam weight boxer who had represented Ireland at the 1924 Paris Olympics. Born in Killarney, Hilliard joined the International Brigades in December 1936

³⁰ *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 19 November 1937.

³¹ *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 4 February 1937.

and was fatally wounded during the Battle of Jarama in February 1937. His letter is remarkable in that it did not cause outrage or complaints in the national newspapers, unlike the article from Laborda that appeared in *The National Student*. Indeed, one could argue that both Hilliard and Laborda were fighting and arguing on behalf of the Republican government. His account, which was only published in *T.C.D. Miscellany*, contains an encounter with an emotional elderly resident in Barcelona:

We marched through Barcelona. What a march! Everywhere the people were out to salute the clenched-fist anti-fascist salute, but I remember one woman. She was about four feet in height. She wore a brown shawl with a design at the border- a shawl like what an Irish woman from the country wears in town on market days. She carried a basket on her left arm, but her right arm was raised and her hand clenched in the anti-fascist salute.³²

In a review of *Ireland To-Day* in *T.C.D. Miscellany* the author drew a distinction between what is classed as communist in Ireland and the United Kingdom:

This month's number of *Ireland To-day* is solid rather than brilliant, but its interest is perhaps the greater for that. We are rejoiced to see a sensible article on Spain by John Fitzgerald, an article which would be considered very mildly Liberal across the water but will, no doubt, be characterized in some circles here as inspired by Moscow.³³

The piece highlighted how conservative and in some ways reactionary Irish mentalities were during this period. An article described by the author as 'sensible' would be characterised as communist in Ireland.

³² *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 27 May 1937.

³³ *T.C.D A College Miscellany*, 11 November 1937.

Belfast

The student demographic at Queen's University in Belfast, despite the institution being 'predominantly Protestant in character', was mixed and more varied than in universities in other parts of Ireland. The number of Catholic students had grown to around 20% of the student body. As Walker and McCreary state, the low number of Catholics was not an outcome of low income, or Catholics being unable to afford university fees because many Catholics from Belfast preferred to attend university in Dublin.³⁴ *The New Northman* was launched in 1932 after the failure of the previous student publications, *Fravlio* which ended in 1926. The publication was printed by T.H. Jordan after approval by the Publication Committee (SCR) at Queen's University of Belfast. Each edition, 22 in total, contained 32 pages and was published on a triannual basis.³⁵ According to Horgan, the *New Northman* was established by a small group of liberal Unionists. He argued; 'The new editor introduced sweeping reforms and criticised its previous editor for having 'alienated almost every shade of opinion' and 'filled pages with worthless rubbish masquerading as enlightened modern thought'.³⁶ Previously, the publication provided little news about the university but concentrated on 'literary and political life of Ulster, of the British Isles and of the world in general'.³⁷ According to Moody and Beckett, student journalism at Queens was in poor health and attracted little support from fellow students. The *Queensman* and *Northman Broadsheet* closed due to a lack of support caused

³⁴ B.M. Walker & A. McCreary, 'Queen's University Belfast: Student Life in Peace and War, 1923-1949', *The Irish Review*, vol. 17/18 (1995): pp. 21–25, p. 23.

³⁵ Clyde Tom, *Irish Literary Magazines: An Outline History and Descriptive Bibliography* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2003). p. 183

³⁶ John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History since 1922* (Routledge, 2001), p. 50.

³⁷ *The New Northman*, Winter 1932.

by their devotion to student news and opinions that did not appeal to the students. Although the *New Northman* survived during this period and renamed again was *Northman* in 1941, the Students' Representative Council, which was behind the establishment of *New Northman*, was in a poor state.³⁸ The *New Northman* ceased publication in the spring of 1950.³⁹

The level of interaction by the students regarding the Spanish Civil War was clear from a small comment piece in *Pro Tanto Quid*, a satirical publication produced to raise funds for the Royal Victoria Hospital. The publication rented a shop from which to sell the magazine in North Street, Belfast. The piece stated, 'The War in Spain – half time scores, Insurgents 3, Government 3.'⁴⁰ The *New Northman*, the official publication of the Students' Union of Queen's University tentatively entered the fray with the publication of several articles. There were no debates across several editions of *The National Student*. The *New Northman* was analytical in its press coverage of the Spanish Civil War in the wake of Harry Midgley's defeat in the 1938 election. The paper argued that the defeat was the result of Catholic demonization of Midgley and was loosely based on 'the merits of General Franco' delineated in a piece in the *Irish News* entitled 'Atheistic Bolshevism'. After the election, the campaign against Midgley and the Madrid Government continued with 'serious distortion of fact' in the *Irish News*, according to the *New Northman*:

A journal which condoned the destruction of Guernica on the grounds that the Basques Catholics ought to have surrendered to the rebels at the outset, cannot be suspected of humanitarian leanings. But that the Head of Christendom should apply such an epithet to a man whom world opinion has condemned for the bombardment of open towns,

³⁸ Guy Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland, and the Second World War* (OUP Oxford, 2015), p. 84.

³⁹ J.C. Moody, & T.W. Beckett, *Queen's Belfast 1845-1949* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 516-517.

⁴⁰ *Pro Tanto Quid* 1938.

piracy on the high seas, and the destruction of civilian lives, is somewhat startling.⁴¹

The attack on Guernica was virtually ignored outside Dublin with even the Unionist press in Belfast publishing few details. Midgley supported the Republic and was met with increasingly vocal supporters of Franco during electioneering in 1938. Midgley had previously dubbed Franco a 'monstrosity' and 'a killer of babies'. During the campaign, he faced stiff opposition from Unionist and nationalist candidates in Belfast. One meeting on 7 February descended into chaos and the police had to be called. As the crowds dispersed there were chants of 'Up Franco' and 'Remember Spain' and 'We want Franco'.⁴²

A review of *Ireland To-Day* in *T.C.D. Miscellany* underpins the claim that *Ireland To-Day* was sensible in its approach to events in Spain:

In September 1936, "Ireland Today" published a symposium on Spain which was remarkable for its fairness and impartiality at a time when the Irish daily papers were screaming about "Red Atrocities" and the virtues of the "Patriot Army".⁴³

Clearly there was an understanding amongst university publications that the Irish media was reactionary and subjective about events in Spain. The editorial staff were clearly aware of the inflammatory reporting in Irish daily newspapers. The publication's views on the civil war were not disclosed. What is clear, however, is the acknowledgement of how partisan the press in Dublin were at the time. The praise for *Ireland To-day* is indeed significant given the complex issues surrounding Spain, not least in Belfast.

⁴¹ *The New Northman*, Summer 1938.

⁴² Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1997), p. 544

⁴³ *The New Northman*, Summer 1937.

Cork

The Quarryman in University College Cork (UCC) was published intermittently from the 1920s until the 1980s and relaunched in 2015.⁴⁴ A surviving edition of the publication suggests that Irish universities felt they were different from their continental partners:

It is a peculiar and interesting fact that whereas in many continental countries the Universities are hotbeds of revolutionary ideas and advanced political cults, our Irish Colleges play a political and cultural role which is diametrically opposite in its cautious conservatism. Indeed, looking over the figures in successive elections, one might fairly say that what Ireland thought yesterday, the University thinks to-day.⁴⁵

The 'conservatism' did not stretch to support for Franco's insurgency. One would have assumed that if the *Quarryman* had an interest in the Spanish Civil War, December 1936 would have been a suitable publication date to rally behind Franco's forces. During the autumn, Franco's forces had massed on the outskirts of Madrid and Irish newspapers carried daily updates on the battle.

The publication initially came out on a monthly basis but then, presumably due to costs or readership, was reduced to quarterly and finally, one edition each term. The *Quarryman* was published by Shandon Printing works and contained 24 pages with no editor cited. It has been described as a 'typical student rag', but it did publish serious articles including 'Peadar O'Donnell and the National Integrity', by 'E.J.S.', suggesting that the publication would have printed articles that, at the very least, made reference

⁴⁴ The *Quarryman* a UCC student publication and the *Varsity Re-Echo* are not available. UCC and NLI hold copies that are not suitable to reference and are incomplete. No other library in Cork or the rest of the country holds any copies. The random copies that have survived they do not contain any reference to the Spanish Civil War.

⁴⁵ *The Quarryman*, December 1936.

to the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁶ There were connections between University College Cork and the war in Spain. The university hosted a lecture on the conflict by a visiting scholar from Queen's University, Rev. Dr. A.H. Ryan in the Dairy Science Lecture Theatre. The title of the lecture was 'The Church and War' and it argued that there was not a better example of a legitimate civil war anywhere else. If Franco lost in Spain, Christianity would be as much destroyed 'as it was humanly possible to make it in Spain'. Indeed, Ryan argued, 'if force had not been used in 1916, our own country would not have achieved the limited measure of freedom they had'. Ryan was suggesting Franco's crusade was the righteous path to freedom for Spain and would allow future Spaniards 'to be born into the bosom of the Catholic Church', just as the 1916 Easter Rising had been a legitimate path for the Irish.⁴⁷ Joseph Healy, a lecturer in Spanish at University College Cork, published a series of four pro-Franco articles for the *Cork Examiner* in November 1937. Incidentally, during the Second World War Healy monitored Berlin Radio's Irish talks for G2, Irish military intelligence.⁴⁸ Healy authored 'The Truth about Spain', a detailed overview of the Spanish conflict which attacked the Non-Interventionist policy, and asked 'are we content in our foreign policy to tag along at the apron-strings of England, a country whose ideals have always been so different from ours?' Healy also delivered extracts from the articles in Cork and the surrounding areas in local halls:

Has Ireland, pathetic in her devotion even to worthless men, like the Stuarts and Jonathan Swift, whom she thought friendly to her, has Ireland forgotten that her sons, driven from their own land, found in

⁴⁶ Tom Clyde *Irish Literary Magazines: An Outline History and Descriptive Bibliography* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2003), p. 166.

⁴⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 26 October 1937.

⁴⁸ David O'Donoghue 'The Nazis in Irish Universities' *History Ireland*, Vol.15, No.5, September-October (2007) p. 13.

Spain a second motherland, and a hospitable refuge, that many of her sons who found Salamanca of Spain an alma mater, returned to her ordained priests of God?⁴⁹

Two future presidents of the university, Alfred O'Rahilly and James Hogan, attended a rally and gave a speech at Grand Parade in support of Franco's insurgency that was attended by 60,000 people.⁵⁰ The bumptious O'Rahilly was a well-known supporter of Catholic Action and the Irish Christian Front whose rallies were 'sweeping Ireland' in 1936.⁵¹ Indeed, O'Rahilly opposed the left-wing tendencies of Labour whilst at University College, Cork, but was also particularly keen on Church engagement with labour and social questions.⁵² O'Rahilly was not a member of the Blueshirt movement but contributed to 'intellectual debate' that surrounded Blueshirt ideology.⁵³ In an article entitled 'Labour Leaders Asked to Clarify Position – Issues Set Out – Questions by Cork Professor', O'Rahilly, who in 1938, was to become a prominent contributor to *The Standard*, a staunchly Catholic paper, and who later became a priest, had an intense antipathy towards the *Irish Times*. In the 1950s, O'Rahilly rounded on the paper, stating that it gave voice to 'all kinds of cranks and scoffers, Sabbatarians, secularists, grouching intellectuals'.⁵⁴ O'Rahilly was writing in his capacity as a representative of the Cork Trades' Council on the Joint Committee for University Extension to ensure that all university classes provided were based 'on Catholic Social Principles'. He

⁴⁹ *Cork Examiner*, November 1937.

⁵⁰ Telegram from Marquis McDwiney to Cardinal of Spain, U271:N (17), de Róiste Papers, Cork and County Archives quoted in Convery, 'Cork and the Spanish Civil War', p. 90.

⁵¹ Fearghal McGarry, Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', *Bullán: an Irish Studies Journal*, vol 4, no. 2 (2000), p. 23.

⁵² McGarry, 'Catholics First and Politicians Afterwards', p. 58.

⁵³ Mike Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 71.

⁵⁴ O'Brien, *The Fourth Estate: Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, p. 94.

demanding answers from labour leaders about a resolution from the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) to support Spanish workers. O’Rahilly condemned the ambiguity of the NUR’s contribution and statement announcing the contribution of funds ‘for the relief of distress amongst Spanish workers, especially the women and children’. He condemned the NUR for contributing funds to the Madrid government which, according to him was headed by ‘a revolutionary Marxist whose declared policy is the transformation of Spain into a Soviet State’. Religion, according to the NUR, ‘is a matter for his own conscience’. This view was ‘highly ambiguous and unsatisfactory’ and ‘is it or is it not admitted that the religious belief of Irish Catholics has definite social implications which their secularist fellow-workers in England do not accept?’ The article asked simply ‘what workers?’⁵⁵. O’Rahilly questioned whether ‘murdered Catholics tortured priests and outraged nuns do not fall within the Railway’s “humanity”’. As far as I can recollect, the victims of the Black and Tans here also failed to evoke the British Unions’ humanity to the extent of a subscription’.⁵⁶ He compares the NUR’s £500 contribution to Spanish workers with the lack of help to victims of the Black and Tans in order to highlight the NUR’s double standards. Irish victims did not receive any assistance from the NUR who, according to O’Rahilly, could not prove categorically that its contribution had not fallen into the hands of the Madrid Government, thus funding the deaths of Catholics in Spain. The position of O’Rahilly was cited in a reply by a P. Murphy from the NUR who accused him of ‘pulling educational rank’ and suggested that the public would benefit from

⁵⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 25 September 1936.

⁵⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 25 September 1936.

less posturing by O'Rahilly. Having been accused of facilitating 'alien propaganda aimed at the perversion of Ireland', Murphy retorted that if O'Rahilly's views and opinions are 'a true reflex of the results of Irish University educations then, may the Lord save us from our universities and protect us from our professors.'⁵⁷ The controversy dragged on until October. O'Rahilly's reply about university education to Murphy would not endear him to uneducated readers, as 'apparently, it is not so easy as he once thought to argue at least against one of them'.⁵⁸ Murphy pointed out that the NUR had participated in the munitions strike of 1920 when 2,020 members were dismissed for refusing to carry British arms.⁵⁹ He also berated the Cork Corporation for not passing a pro-Franco resolution.

Conclusion

The Spanish Civil War had little impact on the student body politic in Ireland, that is, of course, if one takes the student publications as a bellwether for activism and engagement. However, what was published depicted a apathetic student body which, regardless of whether it was in Belfast, Dublin or Cork, mocked the belligerents in Spain, and the views of newspapers throughout Ireland. Father Laborda published several articles on the conflict in the *National Student*. These prompted a series of responses which were reported in the national press. Articles mocked General Franco and the bickering between the newspapers. Satirical articles belittled newspapers' reporting of key battles and humorous poems were published that suggested that no one knew what the conflict was concerned with. In UCC, employees actively

⁵⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 16 October 1936.

⁵⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 17 October 1936.

⁵⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 3 October 1936.

supported Franco's insurgency and publicly debated unions' contributions in the local press.

In Dublin the two student publications, *T.C.D Miscellany* and the *National Student* offered differing opinions on how the conflict was reported. Trinity College's main contribution to the reportage was the publication of an account by Rev. R.M. Hilliard that, surprisingly, did not cause any adverse reaction. Hilliard was an ex-student and his letter was published in full. Subsequent articles, contained no outcry or condemnation. The same treatment was not afforded to Father Laborda who featured in UCD's *National Student*. Shaw and Laborda had previously clashed in the national newspaper columns and the debate continued in *The National Student*. His articles provoked fury from Shaw. The commissioning editor, Mr. T. Hughes, was cited in the national press and emergency board meetings of the paper were held to debate the articles. Several pieces appeared in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* about the furore surrounding the article. The debate continued across several months with Shaw consistently questioning Laborda's integrity and his reason for coming to Ireland.

In Belfast, the *New Northman* did not devote any significant space in its pages to the Spanish conflict. However, with the defeat of Harry Midgley in 1938 in the general election, the *New Northman* allows us a glimpse of the attitude of the editor and copy writers when they suggest that the *Irish News* was responsible for distorting the facts during the election. The article noted that one could not expect much more from a newspaper that virtually ignored the attack on Guernica and suggested that the Basque Catholics were responsible for their own destruction by surrendering to Franco's forces.

Indeed, another significant article reported on a riot in Belfast sparked by the conflict in Spain during the general election and highlighted the difficulties Midgley faced from parts of the Catholic community. The *New Northman's* satirical counterpart, *Pro Tanto Quid*, occasionally mocked the civil war which exemplified the student body's lack of interest in the war in Spain.

In Cork, the situation was more nuanced. *The Quarryman* unfortunately has not survived in the archives, but there were contributions on the Spanish Civil War from two leading lecturers at the university that suggests that the magazine might well have published articles on the conflict. The contributions by Alfred O'Rahilly and Joseph Healy demonstrate that amongst the academic staff in the university there were at least two strong proponents of Franco's insurgency. Healy's articles were prominently placed in the *Cork Examiner*. O'Rahilly, who attended and spoke at rallies in Cork, took to debating with the unions that had contributed to the 'relief of distress amongst Spanish workers', across several editions of the *Cork Examiner*. To O'Rahilly, a prominent contributor to *The Standard*, the 'Spanish workers' meant the Madrid government. O'Rahilly compared the payment from the NUR to Spain to alleged subscriptions to the Black and Tans from British unions in the wake of numerous outrages and deaths of civilians in Ireland, during the British occupation of Ireland.

There is little to suggest that the anti-clerical nature of the conflict in the early few weeks affected student attitudes. Indeed, the onset of the conflict provided publications with the opportunity to satirize the two belligerents. There were no mass protests against the Madrid government or Franco's insurgency, as had happened in the wake of the two world wars. The outcry

occurred at mass rallies in Dublin and Cork, simply did not take place at Irish universities. The reason for this is not clear – but what can be said is that student publications ignored, to a large extent, the conflict itself but did ridicule and exaggerate the Irish media's reaction to events in Spain. There were exceptions, as articles in the *National Student* demonstrate, but these were down to the opinions of the editor and a challenging lecturer, not an outpouring of support for either side. Any activism was carried out by university staff in the form of written protest in the publications. O'Rahilly, Healy and Shaw protested through speeches and penning articles. That was the extent of Irish university activism.

Chapter Six

The 'vulnerable' parish¹ – Donegal and the Spanish Civil War

The narrow reportage of the Spanish war in Irish newspapers concentrated primarily on clerical deaths and the threat posed to Catholicism in Spain and Europe. These concerns were not restricted to national titles. Provincial newspapers, largely overlooked in the historiography of Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, reported the conflict in polemical and manipulative language. As McGarry notes, 'the influence of the provincial press should not be lightly dismissed. Beyond Dublin, people were far more likely to read a local newspaper than a national one'.² Communism was attacked and Christianity championed in editorials, articles and news agency reports. The reportage arguably helped shape Irish public opinion towards a fellow-Catholic people enduring a painful civil war. This chapter examines Donegal as a rural case study. The county was representative of other rural areas because it was remote. The chapter will utilise the rich newspaper coverage and diocesan archives to demonstrate the degree to which communism and the conflict in Spain was reported in provincial Ireland.

The Spanish Civil War was impossible to ignore in Ireland between the summer of 1936 and 1937 and was extensively reported in the *Derry People*, *Donegal Vindicator* and *Donegal Democrat*.³ The three newspapers relied on press agency reports and publicly backed Franco. Initial commentaries spoke

¹ Letter from John McAteer, Parish Priest, Burtonport 7/03/1935. WMN 1950-54 MS Notes. Raphoe Diocese Archives.

² McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', p. 39.

³ Emmet O'Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-43* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), p. 216.

*The newspapers were researched at Letterkenny central library. Only one, the *Derry People*, was available via the Irish Newspaper Archive.

of the 'Madrid government', soon however, to be replaced by terms such as the 'ghastly reds'. In 1938, the world's attention shifted from the Spanish conflict to the looming war with Germany. Donegal newspapers were polarised and the coverage and editorials reflected the changing geo-political landscape in Europe and provide a 'wider insight into local society'.⁴ This chapter argues that the Spanish Civil War allowed frustrations and grievances with British imperialism and partition to be published and debated alongside events in Spain.

This chapter qualitatively analyses the relationship between Donegal newspapers and the Spanish Civil War, and will explore the unique perspective taken by newspapers in the border county. The analysis of Donegal newspapers will illustrate the interplay between local politics and international events. Local politics and Northern Ireland provided the framework in which the Spanish Civil War was reported and understood. Local politics played an important role in Donegal newspaper coverage of the Spanish Civil War, with editorials that reflected the legacy of partition and the creation of Northern Ireland.

Politics in Donegal before the Spanish Civil War

For Donegal newspapers, the Spanish government and communism represented two sides of the same coin – both were vehemently against Catholicism. Society in Ireland was conservative and 'most Irish people' saw the conflict as a battle between Catholicism and communism 'rather than left

⁴ Ozseker, Okan, *Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911-1925* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2019), p. 21.

and right'.⁵ Indeed, as McGarry argues, the Spanish Civil War allows us to observe the interaction between local groups and actors with the formation of public opinion by local newspapers at the heart of the community.⁶

Conservatism in Donegal manifested itself in many ways. For example, concern was expressed that the amount of dances taking place in the 1930s, chiefly to raise parish funds, threatened to engulf the county in controversy and transform a 'bastion of Gaeldom to a sort of rock of scandal'.⁷ Donegal was the most isolated county in the newly partitioned Free State, with a population of 152,508 in 1926 and was underdeveloped and had high levels of poverty. Those in professional jobs were held in high esteem and had a significant influence; 'in Catholic areas throughout Ulster, not least in Donegal, priests, teachers, substantial tenant farmers, local businessmen, proprietors of newspapers and the professions carried huge amounts of cultural baggage'.⁸

There were no pitched battles in the streets of Letterkenny or Donegal Town between Blueshirts and communists, despite Donegal having one of the largest Blueshirt memberships in the state. However, it would be a mistake to assume there were no clashes between Blueshirts and Republicans.⁹ The Cumann na nGaedheal government had fuelled the 'red scare' in the lead up to the 1932 general election. Cosgrave's party maintained three TDs in

⁵ Fearghal McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', *Bullán: an Irish Studies Journal*, vol 4, no. 2 (2000), p. 24.

⁶ McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', p. 23.

⁷ Sean Beattie, Jim Mac Loughlin, *An Historical, Environmental and Cultural Atlas of County Donegal* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013), p. 386.

⁸ Beattie, Mac Loughlin, *An Historical, Environmental and Cultural Atlas of County Donegal*, p. 307.

⁹ There were clashes in Dublin, Tralee, Kilkenny and Drogheda. See Brian Hanley, 'Countering fascist propaganda: Basque priest Ramón Laborda's Irish visit' *Gernika: Then & Now*, April (2017) p. 22. See Introduction for more biographical details of the Blueshirts.

Donegal after the 1932 election, namely, Daniel McMenamin, John White and Eugene Doherty. Fianna Fáil increased their number of TDs to three with the election of Neal Blaney, Frank Carney and Brian Brady.¹⁰ The snap election in 1933 saw Cumann na nGaedheal campaign furiously against Fianna Fáil's economic war with Britain, which left Cumann na nGaedheal with just two TDs in Donegal, Michael McFadden and Daniel McMenamin.¹¹ Fianna Fáil's popularity increased to four TDs; Brian Brady, Neal Blaney, Joseph O'Doherty and Hugh Doherty.¹² Clearly, the scare tactics of Cumann na nGaedheal in this northerly republican county had not worked and by 1933 Fianna Fáil had a greater influence than Cumann na nGaedheal in the county.

'Dangerous literature viruses'¹³ – Concerns over communism

Donegal County Council's minutes reveal one entry that referred to the conflict in Spain, in 1936, which supported Leitrim Co. Council's declaration that Spain had 'delegated its authority to a Junta [sic] of Godless Communists which had culminated in the hideous murders of priests and nuns and the ghoulis desecration of graves.' There were no other resolutions put forward by the council throughout the course of the conflict, unlike many of its counterparts in the south.¹⁴ If the council lacked interest in the civil war, however the press coverage in the county stood in stark contrast.

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 23 February 1933.

¹¹ *Irish Times*, 11 January 1932.

¹² *Irish Times*, 4 February 1933.

¹³ Letter from John McAteer, Parish Priest, Burtonport 7/03/1935. WMN 1950-54 MS Notes. Raphoe Diocese Archives.

¹⁴ Beattie, Mac Loughlin, *An Historical, Environmental and Cultural Atlas of County Donegal*, p. 201. The composition of the council at the outbreak of the conflict was United Ireland Party (Fine Gael) – 12, Fianna Fáil – 14 and 5 Independent councillors.

The clergy in Donegal warned of the dangers that the county could face with the large number of unemployed men. Local priests feared that Donegal was particularly susceptible to communism due to significant numbers of disaffected unemployed. The clergy played a prominent role in the social and cultural life of Donegal with priests occupying 'socially strategic positions in parishes throughout the county'.¹⁵ On 17 September 1931 Cosgrave sent a dossier to the Bishop of Raphoe, William MacNeely. The dossier contained details of subversive and revolutionary groups and individuals in Ireland:

It must not be overlooked that conditions are unusually favourable to the spread of a conspiracy such as the present. There the example and encouragement of Russia, the revolutionary agents of which have not been slow to discover a field for activity amongst the dissatisfied elements in this country and have been strikingly successful in enrolling under their standard the remnants of what was from 1922 up to a few years ago nominally at least an Irish nationalist movement.¹⁶

A reply from Father McAteer, Parish Priest of Burtonport, argued that Donegal was particularly vulnerable to communism:

Some of our young people are inoculated with the I.R.A and other dangerous literature viruses. Our parish with the many hundreds migrating and others scattered in distant lands, is especially vulnerable. Lately a fierce communist pamphlet came by letter post from New York, to Inn xxxxxx [indecipherable] land. Father Gallagher gave it to me. The Sergeant has it at present. The Garda authorities in Dublin are trying to trace back to the origin to see if the propaganda can be prosecuted.

Father McAteer corroborates the Department of Justice's warning about unemployment and economic poverty by stating that the 'weekly influx of unemployed into towns for dole purposes tends to spread such influences'.¹⁷

¹⁵ Beattie, Mac Loughlin, *An Historical*, p. 316.

¹⁶ 'Alliance between Irish Republican Army and Communists', Department of Justice, 17/09/1931. WMN 1950-54 MS Notes. Raphoe Diocese Archives.

¹⁷ Letter from John McAteer, Parish Priest, Burtonport 7/03/1935. WMN 1950-54 MS Notes. Raphoe Diocese Archives.

The social-cultural background of the county is important because it helps to create the context for reports of the Spanish Civil War. The county was poor, dominated by the Catholic Church and was perceived to be vulnerable to communism, key ideological battlegrounds during the reportage of the conflict in Spain. Unlike other areas of Ireland, in Donegal there were no mass protests, ICF demonstrations, town meetings or council resolutions.¹⁸ One of the only sources of public opinion is that of the newspaper coverage.

Derry People and the Tirconaill News

The inaugural mission of the *Derry People and the Tirconaill News* was to 'do what is in our power to awaken, where it is still dormant, and to strengthen where it already exists, the spirit of Irish Nationality, is in brief, the aim and object of the *Derry People*'.¹⁹ The *Derry People* was edited by Paddy McGill during the Spanish Civil War who was secretary of the Irish Anti-Partition League from 1953 to 1956. The paper published once a week on Saturday and cost 2D, slightly less than the *Donegal Democrat*. The paper was staunchly nationalist and believed the Boundary Commission would help to render Northern Ireland unsustainable.²⁰ McGill for the Nationalist Party, as the deputy speaker in the Northern Ireland Senate from 1965 to its abolition in 1972. The *Derry People*'s first editorial on Spain was published on 1 August 1936.²¹ The tone was one of bewilderment and astonishment that 'mild

¹⁸ See McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', pp. 23-47 & Convery, 'Cork and the Spanish Civil War', pp. 83-98.

¹⁹ *Derry People*, 3 April 1903.

²⁰ Okan, *Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911-1925* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2019), p. 21.

²¹ Donegal was no different, if more geographically remote, than other part of the Free State. Editorials were appearing in late July and August 1936 about the conflict in Spain. For a

Socialism and then unconcealed Communism has gained ground in Europe.’ The editorial argued that Spain’s Christian credentials which were a bulwark against ‘heresy and unbelief’ which had survived ‘the relentless persecution of the Moors’, were under threat. The article was clearly anti-Communist and revealed the editor’s thoughts on Soviet interference in the civil war:

The latest evidence of Soviet Russia’s successful interference in European affairs comes from Spain, where at present a disastrous civil war is raging, and where the result is yet in the balance.

The article stressed communism’s ‘devious’ and ‘vindictive’ methods.²² The same edition also featured an eye-witness account from a Donegal resident who was caught in the civil war en route to his holiday in San Sebastian:

The Fascist Army was supposed to be only forty miles away, and the Reds had barricaded the city and sandbagged the streets. Everyone appeared to be armed. Even women carried rifles or revolvers, and elsewhere there was nothing but armed men.²³

The author of the letter negotiated a way out of Spain to France where he spoke to reporters. The publication of the account supplied, for the reader, a non-agency perspective on the current situation in Spain. A third piece in the same edition featured a message from Rev. Dr. Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, and Monsignor Edwin Henson, Rector, English College, Valladolid, Spain who suggested that ‘we may as well reflect that our own house is in danger when our neighbour’s party wall is aflame’. The article reinforced the perceptions of the conflict as one between good and evil, thus narrowing the narrative in the Irish public’s mind:

case study of the Limerick paper’s response, see: McGarry, *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study*, p. 24.

²² *Derry People*, 1 August 1936.

²³ *Derry People*, 1 August 1936.

It is a fight between the forces of Christianity and Communism. The only real Government in Spain is that of General Cabanellas at Burgos. In Madrid the Communists are in possession of the Government offices, and the city is in a state of siege.²⁴

An article entitled 'Anti-Catholic Fury – Fiendish Acts' quoted a *Daily Mail* reporter who spoke with two girls, one English and one American. The girls witnessed 'Communists rushing about burning churches and dancing around frenziedly waving broken sacred images.' Another witness from London described ghastly acts:

Priests were beheaded not by the dozens, but by the score. One priest in one of the largest churches in Madrid was standing before the altar when he was seized by a howling mob. They submitted him to the most disgusting tortures, after which his head was brought out by a youth and stuck on the railing in front of the church.²⁵

An editorial two weeks later was in no doubt about the morally correct side:

Supporters of the Spanish 'Government' cannot deny that the systematic campaign of murder, pillage and destruction was the direct outcome of the senseless policy of indiscriminate arming of the worst elements of the population, a pretext for which was found when the 'Government' realised that every decent organisation in the country and every shade of responsible opinion countenanced the armed protest made by the Patriots against a programme the inevitable sequel to which would have been complete domination of the peninsular by the agents of Bolshevik Russia.²⁶

The ghastly acts were in many cases true but only one side in the war is described for the reader. There are no accounts of Republican areas being attacked or shelled. There is no objectivity in the reports. Readers might, arguably, come away from reading the articles with only one impression, that Catholicism was under attack.

²⁴ *Derry People*, 15 August 1936.

²⁵ *Derry People*, 15 August 1936.

²⁶ *Derry People*, 15 August 1936.

Throughout August, October and November 1936 the *Derry People* carried almost weekly articles covering the Spanish Civil War and the attempt by Franco's forces to capture Madrid. The *Derry People* published a transcript from Radio Éireann of the Pope's address to refugees from the conflict. The edited lead paragraph warned of 'the utmost gravity to the world with regard to the forces of evil which are attacking the Church and Society with satanic hatred'. The emotive language used to introduce the Pope's message was far more descriptive and animated than that of the Pope's, who urged his followers to restore 'the rights and honour of God and religion, to save the rights and dignity of conscience'. In the same edition, the editorial addressed the Pope's message to the refugees and argued Ireland had to confront communism:

The enemies of God and civilisation have never been so strong as they are to-day. Even here in Ireland, Communism has raised its head and events in Spain and elsewhere should teach us it is not to be lightly regarded. The solemn warning of the Holy Father cannot be allowed to go unheeded if we in our own turn are not to be exposed to the horrors which have devastated so many countries in the recent past.²⁷

By late summer and autumn 1936 the *Derry People* was referring to Franco's forces as the 'Patriots' and the government of the second Republic as the 'ghastly Reds'. However, there was a subtle shift in the editorial stance. Editorials entitled 'Uneasy Europe', 'European Conditions', 'Grave European Situation' all pointed to the emergence of another war and a realisation that the conditions found in Spain were arguably a product of international relations as much as Spain's domestic politics.²⁸ The change in editorial stance was at odds with the nationalist beginnings of the *Derry People*. An editorial entitled

²⁷ *Derry People*, 19 September 1936.

²⁸ *Derry People*, 24 October, 6 November 1936.

'Uneasy Europe' articulated the position of Germany and its claim to regain colonies with the support of Italy:

If they can keep faith with each other they can do much for their countries, and almost certainly will considerably reduce the sphere of British influence. Great Britain does not fancy being opposed in war to Italy and Germany combined, despite the auxiliary assistance of the hordes of Soviet Russia's Red Army and the trained legions of France, and hence her anxiety to come to an immediate 'understanding' with Adolf Hitler.²⁹

The editorial argued that the prize of a diminished British influence in the world was one that should be grasped and that the Fascist powers of Germany and Italy could only bring good to their people. This stance was unsurprising, as the paper's tone and editorial line railed consistently against British colonialism and its history in Ireland, a weekly staple in the *Derry People*. The number of articles and editorials concerning the Spanish Civil War dwindled between October 1937 and April 1939. There was no mention of the withdrawal of the International Brigades or the recognition afforded to Franco by Britain or France. On 21 May 1938, an editorial accused Britain of hypocrisy. Britain was arguing for minority rights for 'Czech Nazis' whilst at the same time pursuing discrimination against a minority in Northern Ireland:

Consider how Britain, the friend and protector of minorities on the Continent and the champion of national unity against partition, approaches the Irish Partition.

The editor clearly did not distinguish between the two situations and was at pains to stress Britain's hypocrisy:

What is an injustice to the German nation in Europe becomes a divine right in Ireland: Germany may not be denied her lost minorities, but Ireland dare not ask for hers. The whole secret, of course, lies in the fact that Hitler can set ten million armed men marching to back up his

²⁹ *Derry People*, 16 October 1936.

words by deeds, *ergo*, the apostle of warfare must be conciliated – even to the extent of acknowledging that what the Allies did in 1919 was wrong and that it is high time the error was rectified.³⁰

The coupling of European events with those in Ireland occurred again on 27 August 1938 in an editorial entitled ‘Germany’s Gestapo – And Ours!’. The full extent of the Gestapo’s brutality was not known by 1938. The editorial compared the draconian laws in Germany that ‘curtail individual liberty and to make the machinery of State thoroughly autocratic and terrifying’ with the Special Powers Act in Northern Ireland. The new laws in Germany were greeted with ‘editorial rampages of disgust and shame in all great newspapers of Europe’ and argued that certain laws faced by Northern Catholics were comparable with the discriminatory laws in Hitler’s Germany. Journalism was ‘tied’ in Northern Ireland with a ‘Unionist-controlled press’ unable to see their partisan standards.³¹ The analysis was in keeping with the partition-obsessed *Derry People*, which seemed unable to deal with fast-moving European events without referring to the partition of Ireland. After the fall of Barcelona the *Derry People* published its last editorial on the conflict on 4 January 1939. In a vitriolic tone, the article argued that the fall of Barcelona had come about because of a ‘brilliantly conceived plan of campaign in Catalonia, the forces of General Franco are now mopping up the remaining fragments of that north-eastern corner in which the Red junta have still a brief authority.’³²

The article stressed that Catholic Spain was triumphant over an atheist invasion because ‘the Spanish people in their hour of triumph thanks the world and the courageous fighters who have stemmed for good the brazen attempt

³⁰ *Derry People*, 21 May 1938.

³¹ *Derry People*, 27 August 1938.

³² *Derry People*, 4 January 1939

of Communism to find a foothold on the shores of the Atlantic'. Within a short period, Spain would recover and rise 'phoenix-like from the ashes of the Communist failure.'³³ The article's triumphal tone completely misses the geo-political ramifications of Franco's victory. Within five-months Europe would be plunged into another war with Fascist forces, buoyed by Franco's victory.

Donegal Vindicator

The *Donegal Vindicator* was a self-professed constitutional nationalist paper established by Pa McAdam in Ballyshannon. The paper supported John Redmond during his campaign for Home Rule. The paper was first published on 4 February 1889 and acted as a mouth-piece for the Land League in Co. Donegal. Pa McAdam was born in Scotland to Irish parents and returned to Ballyshannon in 1901 with his new wife after his first wife died.³⁴ Eily McAdam was the editor during the 1920s and was an active Republican who navigated the paper through partition and the Free State's embryonic years during the 1920s and the paper supported Sinn Féin and was anti-treaty.³⁵ The paper was significantly cheaper than its main rivals at 1p, therefore arguably enabling the paper to be more accessible. During the 1930s, the editor was Marie McAdam, Pa McAdam's eldest daughter, who She supported General O'Duffy at the start of the Spanish Civil War. Subsequently, the election of

³³ *Derry People* 4 January 1939.

³⁴ John Ward, 'Pa McAdam--The Grandfather I Never Knew' Linking Canada and Ireland (2009) <http://www.Vindicator.ca/htory/vinStory/vinStory1.html> (Accessed 2/03/15) see also; Hugh Oram, *A History of Newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983*. Dublin, MO Books, 1983, p. 141.

³⁵ Ozseker, *Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911-1925*, p. 22.

Éamon de Valera in 1932 meant that the paper lost advertising revenue and commercial job-printing since it had not supported Fianna Fáil.³⁶

The first editorial described the atrocities inflicted on priests, nuns and 'the Catholic population'. The article continued in a pious tone, arguing 'the wages of such sins will be death, but for the dead the crown of martyrdom awaits'. The editorial in many ways was like that of the *Derry People*, except that the *Vindicator* did not explicitly blame communism for the outbreak of the conflict. An article in the same edition entitled 'Reported Fall of Valencia' told of areas that were under 'Government' control and, based on the Reuters report, gave an account of what areas had fallen to the 'Insurgents'. The article concluded in a sombre tone with regards to events in Barcelona 'one doubts if there is a single priest remaining alive in that district, and tells [refugees] of seeing three nuns drenched with petrol and then set on fire'.³⁷

The first editorial included a warning from the Pope about the dangers of communism and warned 'Catholicism, and Catholicism alone was communism's enemy'. The conclusion argued 'that we must be on our guard' and the civil war in Spain could 'happen elsewhere-even in our own country. We must ban Communism in Ireland, and it must be done at once.'³⁸ In a series of articles and letters between August and December 1936 the paper focused on a local angle to the conflict. Unlike the personal accounts of the conflict that appeared in the *Derry People*, the *Vindicator* was concerned with the growing threat of communism from within Ireland. A letter from Edward McCauley, Ballintra, reveals how local communities felt threatened. The letter

³⁶ John Ward, 'Marie McAdam -The Daughter and her Mission' Linking Canada and Ireland (2009) <http://www.Vindicator.ca/htory/vinStory/vinStory3.html> (Accessed 2/03/15).

³⁷ *Donegal Vindicator*, 1 August 1936.

³⁸ *Donegal Vindicator*, 19 September 1936.

began by protesting at the treatment of Spanish workers and asked if the government would prevent such an uprising in Ireland:

Will the present Government do something to stop Russian agents from getting a foothold in Ireland? Only a few weeks ago an attempt was made by a Communist agent from Moscow to blindfold the workers of South Donegal but the land of the O'Donnells cried out 'Down with Russia and Communism'.³⁹

The letter suggested that workers in Donegal were alive to the threat 'posed' by communism. The 'Russian agents' could have been member of the Communist Party of Ireland, not agents from Moscow. The article stated that communism was not welcome in Donegal:

The authorities will have to step in at once. Our young people are thoughtless, but they are true to their faith and church, but it is unthinkable that in small rural areas such as Ballintra, they should be subjected to such temptations, and they must be protected. It is likely more will be hear [sic] of this in Ballintra'.⁴⁰

Undoubtedly something occurred in Ballintra that provoked the public outcry in the *Vindicator*.⁴¹ The letter was followed on 24 October by another article reporting a resolution of the Killybegs division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians:

That we...strongly condemn the hideous atrocities of the Atheistic Popular Front Government of Spain against Christianity, in their deliberate diabolical murders of priests and nuns, and all who openly profess Catholicity. We further condemn the burning of Churches, Convents and Monasteries, and other sacrilegious outrages committed against Christ, and appeal to all Irish Catholics to assist in crushing Communism from amongst us.⁴²

³⁹ *Donegal Vindicator*, 19 September 1936. I could find no evidence for such a claim but could be linked to the event at Ballintra.

⁴⁰ *Donegal Vindicator*, 22 August 1936.

⁴¹ I have been unable to find any direct reference to an incident in Ballintra during my research, other than in newspapers in this chapter. Possibly the incident referred to a meeting of the Ballintra Workers' Rights Association. See page 201

⁴² *Donegal Vindicator*, 24 October 1936.

The two anti-communist letters are a crude indication of public opinion in Donegal, showing that the public were aware of the perceived 'threat' that Communism posed to the country and wrote to the local paper with their concerns. The *Vindicator* published far fewer articles in 1937 on the Spanish conflict than it had between July and December 1936. Unlike the *Derry People*, the *Vindicator* carried various articles documenting the International Brigades casualties, as well as the trials and tribulations of the Irish Brigade who fought with Franco. The graphic and salacious reports on the Republican forces continued. The *Vindicator* carried a report from *Croix du Midi*, a Toulouse-based Catholic journal, that described the Republican forces hunting priests with dogs in the mountains. The article suggested that young girls were being used to lure households suspected of harbouring a priest into a trap. The girl would desperately claim she needed to see him so her family could receive the Last Rites, but 'If the priest is deceived by this trickery, he is at once arrested and led to martyrdom'.⁴³ The headline 'Hunt for Priests in Spain: Trained Dogs Employed' was misleading. A short sentence stated that dogs were being used to hunt priests in the mountains. No evidence was produced and no eye-witness account given. There is no evidence that such a practise was ever undertaken during the civil war. What one can argue is that the article from *Croix du Midi* was designed to dehumanise the Republican Government in Madrid in much the same way as the derogatory comments on female fighters in the defence of Madrid were designed to do.

An emotive editorial on 2 February castigated de Valera and his adherence to the Non-Intervention Act and accused the government of

⁴³ *Donegal Vindicator*, 2 January 1937.

abandoning a country that desperately needed help. The editorial was undoubtedly arguing for the need for Ireland to revoke diplomatic recognition to Spain:

Ireland can never again pose as a defender of the old Faith-she has abandoned a country struggling for that Faith against the powers of Evil as far as it is in her power to do so.⁴⁴

The *Independent* also opposed the Non-Intervention Act in February 1937 unlike Fine Gael. The act was designed to prevent volunteers travelling to Spain.⁴⁵ The *Vindicator's* editorial argued that the election that brought the Popular Front to power was not chosen by the Spanish people:

The slaughter of Bishops, Priests and Nuns, the burning of Cathedrals and Churches show the 'choice' they got-the choice between giving up their faith and martyrdom. They chose the latter, and are blessed. The wonderful success of the General Francos [sic] Insurgents in spite of the great handicap under which they laboured in the beginning, shows the [sic] that Divine assistance has been his in the struggle.⁴⁶

Ireland had abandoned a fellow Catholic country in the throes of a civil war. De Valera is quoted at length: 'It is better, said the President, "for the Spanish people to settle their differences free from outside interference, and work out for themselves the form of government most suited to their own ideals and opinions" – Did anyone ever hear such nonsense'. The editorial made no reference to physical or material help that could be offered, but said that to shy away from the conflict was out of the question. According to the editorial 'Divine assistance' had been at work in Spain:

The wonderful success of General Francos [sic] Insurgents in spite of the great handicap under which they laboured in the beginning, shows that Divine assistance has been his in the struggle. Thank God, despite the Free State Government, Ireland has taken her place in the struggle,

⁴⁴ *Donegal Vindicator*, 20 February 1937.

⁴⁵ McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 70.

⁴⁶ *Donegal Vindicator*, 20 February 1937.

and will share in the triumph. The future historian of Spain will do justice to the Irish Brigade.⁴⁷

The Pastoral Letter of 1937 by Rev. Dr. O'Kane in the Derry Diocese concurred with the *Vindicator's* editorial and stressed the need for vigilance against the communist threat in Ireland. The letter acknowledged the Catholicism of a limited number of Basque people who had supported the government but, 'it is plain now that exaggerated nationalism counts more with them than attachment to the Faith-a warning to ourselves that if we give ear to traitors in our midst, our constancy to our religion may be undermined, and the emissaries of Russia may succeed where open persecution failed.'⁴⁸

The spring of 1937 marked a reduction of the *Vindicator's* reporting of the Spanish Civil War. The Irish Brigade's return to Ireland was covered extensively in June 1937 and included a quote from an unnamed special correspondent for the *Irish Independent* who stated that the men were 'straight, alert, and sunburned, well disciplined, and as enthusiastic as the day they left Galway'.⁴⁹ Despite the conflict continuing until April 1939, there was scant reporting in the pages of the *Vindicator* of the remainder of the conflict. One element, however, that was reported was the looming prospect of another European war. Anxiety over European geo-politics was increasing and Britain's ability to defend herself was called into question in an editorial on 8 October 1938, which argued that Britain might never despatch an expeditionary force overseas again. The editorial referred to Germany's

⁴⁷ *Donegal Vindicator*, 20 February 1937.

⁴⁸ *Donegal Vindicator*, 13 February 1937. Unlike the case in Limerick – there are no records of sermons by priests concerned with the Spanish Civil War in local papers. See McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', pp. 38-39.

⁴⁹ *Donegal Vindicator*, 26 June 1937.

annexation of the Sudetenland and criticised the dealers and merchants who were hoping to cash-in on war time prices:

It is unlikely that there will ever be another British Expeditionary Force despatched overseas to fight in Europe...The British Premier well knew what war meant. Many in Ireland did not know. Ireland has much greater cause for rejoicing that war has been averted than she knows.⁵⁰

By the war's conclusion there were very few vitriolic editorials against Britain regarding colonialism, and debates about partition had quietened. In their place was a pragmatic and Ireland-centric editorial approach to the threat posed by Hitler's Germany. In an editorial on 18 March 1939 the editor made clear that Germany had broken the Munich treaty and war was becoming increasingly likely:

The Truth is, Hitler has slapped Mr Chamberlain's face, and whether you're an Anglo-phile or an Anglophobe you know that there are definite limits to British stoicism. It will not surprise us if mass-hysteria is induced by the insult, and we regard the immediate future with utmost gravity and foreboding. The question of Eire's position in time of war leaps again into the forefront of home politics and individual conjecture. There may be a Heaven-sent appeasement, but it will need to come quickly. England's fighting machine is not out of gear as it was in September.⁵¹

The *Vindicator's* editorial stance may have shifted by the spring of 1939 in terms of another European war, but its stance on the Spanish Civil War remained consistent. Warning of a European war with Nazi Germany was central to its reportage at this time.

With the fall of Barcelona in January 1939, Franco had cleared the penultimate hurdle, with only Madrid remaining to be taken. The Republican forces had been routed, having been split in two in April 1938 after their defeat

⁵⁰ *Donegal Vindicator*, 8 October 1938.

⁵¹ *Donegal Vindicator*, 18 March 1939.

at the Battle of Ebro. The *Vindicator* heralded Franco's victory in glorious terms linking Franco's insurgency to Divine assistance. The editorial, which was to be the *Vindicator's* last on the conflict, was published on 28 January 1939. Franco, and therefore, the Church, had prevailed over the godless communists:

The unbelievable sacrilege and inhuman blasphemy of the Red campaign can only be explained by the belief that veritably the gates of Hell had been opened; Franco's victory may be linked with the Divine assurance: 'The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.'

We salute Franco.⁵²

The last article on the conflict appeared on 1 April 1939 with the fall of Madrid. Nationalist forces poured in to a 'death-ridden Madrid' to 'scenes of wild enthusiasm'. The article briefly detailed the last few months of the war and finished, quite fittingly, given the geo-political context of 1939, with a report of the congratulatory telegram from Hitler to Franco which applauded 'the final defeat of a nation-destroying Bolshevism'.⁵³

Donegal Democrat

The *Donegal Democrat* was established in 1919 in Ballyshannon by John Downey who had been a printer with the *Vindicator* and wanted to create a newspaper which was 'a non-political paper in a world of politics'. The paper was a weekly publication and cost three half pence, slightly more than the *Donegal News*. The first editorial stressed the need for unbiased truth:

They read one organ's version, they turn to another, what is the result, not corroboration, but very often a direct denial of the facts as they appeared in the contemporary journal. This then shall be our object; to

⁵² *Donegal Vindicator*, 28 January 1939.

⁵³ *Donegal Vindicator*, 1 April 1939.

get at the truth, and publish that same unbiased truth, without regard to class, creed, politics.⁵⁴

The *Donegal Democrat's* coverage of the Spanish Civil War differed from the *Derry People's* and the *Vindicator's*. The coverage was often sparse and lacking in detail. The lack of objectivity that was present in the *Derry People* and *Vindicator* was also present in the *Donegal Democrat*. The initial editorials argued that the violence that had engulfed Spain had not been inevitable. Discussing the insidious nature of communism from the onset of the war, the article suggested that the Spanish people were duped:

Not by force at first. The initial proceedings are invariably these. Insidious propaganda: next, mob violence and terrorism. 'Then, when it is too late, the helpless bulk of the populace vainly strive to stem the torrent. Too late, indeed: by their procrastination and apathy they allowed their rights to be taken from them.'⁵⁵

An editorial made reference to a communist meeting in Donegal which argued communist leaflets had been distributed on local transport and were circulating in south Donegal:

Be that as it may, it is a fact that Communist literature, under the guise of 'Social Credit' was circulated in this locality recently. The fundamental doctrine underlying this described by those who are qualified to speak with authority as, is rank communism. It is expected and hoped that nobody in this district or any other district as well, will be led astray by this sugar-coated teaching of Moscow.⁵⁶

The leaflets were distributed on a train containing members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Killybegs.⁵⁷ This was the first article that contained any

⁵⁴ *Donegal Democrat*, 6 June 1919.

⁵⁵ *Donegal Democrat*, 28 August 1936.

⁵⁶ *Donegal Democrat*, 22 August 1936.

⁵⁷ This may have been the event behind the resolution by the Killybeg's Ancient Order of Hibernians. See footnote 39. However, the phrase 'Social Credit' was intriguing. The term referred to a right-wing, populist, anti-communist groupuscule in the late 1930s and 40s. After August 1936 there was little mention of 'social credit'.

details, however scant, on local issues concerning communism. The editorial conceded that the meeting and leaflet distribution may have been a hoax, but nevertheless, much of the editorial was taken up with the issue, thus reinforcing the perceived threat from communism. From the outset, the *Democrat* connected the coverage of the Spanish Civil War with the threat posed by the Soviet Union and the increasing inevitability of a second world war. The paper recognised that Europe was headed for a second world war, warning in an editorial on 31 October 1936:

Spain is but a microcosm of Europe beyond the Pyrenees. The next struggle – and it looks like coming-will likely be between the same contestants, those who uphold with passionate faith European Christianity and culture against the supporters of a totally different ethical code. Their sympathies with either party in Spain to-day prove clearly the ‘lining-up’ of the next European battlefield.

The editorial continued to suggest Ireland was not immune from the threat:

It is well to prepare in Ireland for a battle for our faith. Dry rot had eaten into the fabric of Mexico and Spain insidiously and the latter has had to battle fiercely for her existence as a Christian State. We must prepare lest indifference should prove our undoing.⁵⁸

The week-to-week coverage in the *Donegal Democrat* was not as extensive as that in the *Vindicator* or *Derry People*. However, the papers do have a common element: animosity towards the United Kingdom:

In 1919, when ‘the peace that was passeth understanding’ was ‘unilaterally’ rammed down German throats and humiliations, reminiscent of a Roman conquest, inflicted on a proud, brave and cultured race, we in Ireland felt sympathy and expressed understanding with the Teutonic People. Instead of black troops [sic] in the Ruhr to-day the steel-helmeted troops of the Reich are marching proudly – youth resurgent, a living barrier to Bolshevism.

⁵⁸ *Donegal Democrat*, 31 October 1936.

The editorial's preoccupation was anti-communism. The defeated German Army was now a strong physical barrier against communism. The nature of the resurgent Reich was not clear in 1936, but the fact that a Fascist Germany was vehemently anti-communist was an important issue for the *Democrat*. In a departure from the line in the *Vindicator*, the *Democrat* in February 1937 strongly advocated that Ireland should not become embroiled in the Spanish Civil War. The editorial stressed there was no need to fight in Spain to support Franco's campaign. It also acknowledged the German view of the Catholic Church:

The wiser policy, in the long run, will be to let the Spanish people settle this agonizing quarrel themselves. Ireland needs all her own sons at home and has long enough been duped to fight for other causes than her own. The sympathy of the clear majority of Irish people is, undoubtedly, with the Catholic party in Spain and it has given generously towards funds which will alleviate those suffering. It is very unfair 'to cash in electronically [sic] on Christianity' (as was cleverly said in the Dáil) by arrogating unto one's self the defence of the Faith and by openly saying that the Government is in sympathy with the Communist party because it does not recognise those opposing it in Spain.⁵⁹

The Dáil debate referenced in the editorial was the second reading of the Spanish Civil War Non-Intervention Bill on 19 February 1937. The lengthy debate too place to decide whether the government was right to wait to recognise Franco's administration. James Dillon, Fine Gael TD for Donegal West, called on the government to recognise Franco's administration and show the world that Ireland was Catholic and proud of it:

Your sympathies must be on one side or the other, either for Caballero or for Franco. There is no use talking in wild vapourings about Communism, Fascism, democracy or anything else. The issue in Spain, the fundamental issue, is God or no God. Fully 95 per cent. [sic] of our

⁵⁹ *Donegal Democrat*, 27 February 1937.

people desire to see an administration prevailing in that country which believes in the existence of God.⁶⁰

The editorial did not stress the need to recognise Franco's regime to legitimise its position shows that the *Democrat* taking an alternative approach to relations with Spain, by suggesting that recognition of Franco was not necessary. Patrick McGilligan, Fine Gael TD for the National University of Ireland, expressed a view that succinctly illustrates the power and position the Catholic clergy held in 1930s' Ireland. Addressing the Dáil, McGilligan argued that the clergy in Ireland had a greater understanding of the Spanish Civil War than the government:

One could go through a list of statements from people in important positions, but if one can confine one's attention only to the statements made by the clergy, by the bishops, one cannot say that the menace of Communism is completely absent from this country and one cannot say, if the hierarchy in this country represent the people, that the Spanish conflict is regarded as a matter of one political philosophy against another.⁶¹

If the 'hierarchy' represented the people, it arguably diminished the power and influence of elected representatives. Markedly different from that of the *Derry People* and the *Vindicator*, the civil war coverage in the *Democrat* remained scant between 1937 and Franco's victory in the spring of 1939. By the summer of 1937 the Irish Brigade had returned home and the pro-Franco lobby had become weakened as a result of the Christian Front misappropriating funds destined for Spanish Catholics. In a column entitled 'Our Dublin Letter' under the headline 'Spanish Volunteers' on 15 October 1938 the author articulated

⁶⁰ Dáil Debates, 19 February 1937.

⁶¹ Dáil Debates 19 February 1937.

a point of view that was seldom published by Irish newspapers during the conflict:

With the publicity accorded the Christian Front Volunteers under General O'Duffy, fighting on the opposite side, these came in for considerable obloquy and abuse; but whether one believes they went out to fight for one of the last of the torch-bearers of democracy on the Continent or for atheistic persecutors of Christianity. Moscow-inspired-the prevailing opinions of the Spanish government and none can deny their courage and idealism, as real and wholehearted as any in the past Irish struggle for nationhood.⁶²

The column revealed a rarely held view in Ireland of the Spanish conflict, but it may also point to a divide between rural and urban Ireland. The departure of Frank Ryan and others for Republican Spain was not reported, nor were their exploits. Furthermore, in an article on 29 October 1938 the *Democrat* reported the release of a Donegal prisoner of war who had fought for the Spanish Republic: 'Donegal man rleased' [sic]. Only minimal details were available but he was released to British authorities and set sail aboard HMS Intrepid.⁶³

There were two intriguing letters to the editor in May 1938 whose content was unique to the Donegal newspapers. The letters are concerned with the perceived increase in communist propaganda in Ireland. The fear of communism was a primary concern during the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The author was Edward McCauley (Junior) secretary of Ballintra Workers' Rights Association. The letter was a reply to a J.S Hamilton of Brownhall, Ballintra. The correspondence referred to a dispute about the welfare of farmers and workers' rights. The exchange demonstrated interaction between the landed classes and the workers. McCauley used

⁶² *Donegal Democrat*, 15 October 1938.

⁶³ *Donegal Democrat*, 29 October 1938.

terminology associated with communism e.g. 'comrade', whereas Captain Hamilton was clearly anti-workers' rights.

Why should Captain Hamilton bother about the small farmer when he is not a small farmer? Personally, I should rank him among the rancher class: ranchers being graziers of bullocks and small farmers tillers of the land.

Towards the end of the letter McCauley's suggested:

Captain Hamilton knows that my comrades, the workers throughout the county. (sic) assisted to put the present Government in power, and I thank god that that Government has paved the way for bettering the conditions of the toiler.⁶⁴

Throughout the coverage of the Spanish Civil War in the *Donegal Democrat*, the Rock Cinema in Ballyshannon advertised its films accompanied by a small review column. By the 1930s films were being shown throughout the county in cinemas and parochial halls. Buncrana, Donegal Town, Lifford, Ballybofey, Milford and Glenties all had cinemas.⁶⁵ A listing in 1938 caused offence. *Blockade*, directed by William Dieterle and produced in the United States, told the story of a Spanish peasant who took up arms to protect his farm. The complainant signed the letter – 'Anti-Red':

I wonder if the management are aware that this picture has been the subject of considerable controversy in this country and in America. There is a strong feeling against it in many quarters on the grounds that it is a thoroughly biased and inaccurate account of the war in Spain, depicting the Franco forces bombing civilian centres and committing numerous other act of "frightfulness," in fact a blatant piece of Red propaganda. We get enough of this from other sources. Must we swallow it in the form of entertainment? ⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Donegal Democrat*, 7 May 1936.

⁶⁵ Beattie, Mac Loughlin, *An historical*, p. 386.

⁶⁶ *Donegal Democrat*, 10 December 1938.

The peasant falls in love with a Russian woman whose father was involved with espionage. The film was controversial and many pro-Fascist governments in Europe proposed to ban it. The director responded to the threat of a ban by refusing to change the film and argued, 'I'm going to release this Spanish picture as it is, and if it's banned in Europe, I'll have to take my loss'.⁶⁷ Indeed, Fr. Flanagan, who supported the Spanish Republic, mentioned the film in his speech at Madison Square Gardens in 1938. Fr. Flanagan stated that the threat by Catholic organizations to boycott a theatre in Boston would help to 'bring more people to the theatre than will be kept away'.⁶⁸ The manager in Ballyshannon responded to the criticism by 'Anti-Red' in a letter titled 'A much-discussed film' and argued that it was obvious the complainant had not watched the film:

If "Anti-Red" has not seen this picture himself, as I take it he has not, he would be well-advised to visit the Rock during the period of showing. He will see a great film, which is the most powerful indictment of war that has yet gone forth from the cinema screen. It is a wholesome lesson for the war-minded.⁶⁹

The interaction highlighted the fact that there were people who did not subscribe to the simplistic portrayal of the Spanish Civil War in Donegal newspapers. In fact, the film's release caused controversy in Limerick. A jury of 'prominent Cork citizens' deemed the film acceptable for viewing but the same film was decided to be unfit for a Limerick audience.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ The Internet Movie Database. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0029924/> (Accessed on 08/04/15).

⁶⁸ Michael O'Flanagan, American Catholics and the War in Spain. Verbatim speech given at Madison Square Garden, New York, 19 July 1938.

⁶⁹ *Donegal Democrat*, 7 January 1939.

⁷⁰ McGarry, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War: A Regional Study', p. 41.

An article by the *Democrat* that clearly articulated the lack of interest in the latter stages of the war was published in the opinion column 'Our Dublin Letter' which stated that soon Spain would be a Fascist country:

In the event of his victory, Spain must unquestionably fall within the Fascist orbit, whose recently-emerging attitude to Christianity in general and the Catholic faith is such as to bring pain and perplexity to (sic) those friendly to General Franco on sincere religious ground.⁷¹

The last editorial to cite Spain was published on 28 January 1939 and did not contain any references to communism or Fascism. Rather it mourned the destruction and fallen prestige of Spain.

Conclusion

What this case study has demonstrated is the narrow reportage of the Spanish Civil War in Donegal. The county was perceived to be vulnerable to communism by the Department of Justice and local clergy. The interaction in the newspapers between the conflict in Spain and the threat posed by communism suggests there was a deeply anti-communist press in the county. This narrow reportage of the Spanish Civil War coupled with anti-communist feeling resulted in a distorted and biased account in the newspapers. Given the political make-up of Donegal, these opinions can be taken as evidence of a typical parochial society in the 1930s. The citizens of Donegal, to the extent that they thought about the Spanish Civil War at all, arguably viewed the conflict in terms of the defence of God and the Catholic Church. This translated into defence of Franco who was perceived as a defender of the faith. The

⁷¹ *Donegal Democrat*, 10 December 1938.

inhabitants of Donegal thereby lulled themselves into an association with one of the longer-lasting Fascist dictatorships of the twentieth-century.

The *Derry People's* Catholic ethos was reflected in its reporting of the Spanish Civil War. The paper's editorials and articles supported Franco and were wrapped in a cloak of Irish nationalism. The *Democrat* published articles of a vastly different nature to that of the *Derry People* and the *Vindicator*. The *Democrat* stressed the need not to recognise Franco's regime (although still supported his insurgency) and by 1938 had published articles proclaiming the folly of the civil war and the bravery of both sides concerned. Nothing similar appeared in the pages of the *Derry People* or the *Vindicator*. The *Derry People* reported local connections to the civil war, but it was the *Donegal Democrat* that published letters, opinions and editorials that reflected local concern about the rise in communism in Ireland. The mysterious meeting in Ballintra featured at least once in every paper, along with the vocal denunciations by the Ancient Order of Hibernians against the Spanish government. Little, if any attempt, was made by Donegal newspapers to separate and analysis the reasons behind the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. After mid-August 1936, many of the articles in the Donegal newspapers were littered with pro-clerical and anti-communist rhetoric.

One element that all three papers had in common is a religious perspective on the conflict. General Franco was protecting Spain from the evils of communism. The devotion to Franco's insurgency arguably shaped the reporting of the civil war for the readers of Donegal newspapers. The terminology used at the start of August 1936 in the *Democrat* employed the term 'insurgents' for Franco's forces and 'Government forces' for the

Republicans. By 15 August the Government of Spain was 'Government' and 'Reds'. Christianity in Spain, as argued by Donegal newspapers, was acting as a bulwark against communism and the Soviet Union. The Spanish Civil War and the need to fight against communism became synonymous with each other. Donegal editorials reported the Spanish Civil War through the lens of Ireland's colonial past. Britain's hypocrisy featured heavily in the coverage of the civil war, as did the looming crisis in Europe. The editorials and articles argued that another European war was likely. The editorials' argued that Britain would be plunged into war. An editorial in the *Democrat* was a clear example of this belief. It criticised Britain and mocked her efforts during the First World War (but neglected to state that hundreds of thousands of Irishmen had fought in the British army) and argued that Ireland had sympathy for Germany. The interaction in the newspapers between Spain and the threat posed by communism exposed a rich thread of historical sources. The newspapers in Donegal appeared unable to report the Spanish Civil War and events in Europe without reference to Ireland's own history. Editorials laced with references to Britain's so-called hypocrisy in relation to the next European war, exemplify the state's insularity and preoccupation with its colonial past.

Chapter Seven

'Up the Republic!'¹ – Republican Propaganda during the Spanish Civil War

Those were the people, that was the war that the people of Catholic Ireland thought was a war for Christianity. The Italian Cromwell of to-day was murdering in Spain just as the English Cromwell murdered in Ireland, and the descendants of the murdered Irish were applauding his deeds²

These words by Rev. Father Michael O'Flanagan were spoken at a meeting of the Irish Food for Spain Committee in the Metropolitan Hall, Dublin in January 1939. For a Catholic priest, notwithstanding Father O'Flanagan's radical background, to speak in such terms was highly unusual and powerful propaganda. This chapter will demonstrate that despite the scholarly work that has been conducted on the reportage of the Spanish Civil War in Irish newspapers, there exists a theme that has been neglected: propaganda. Propaganda for the Irish Brigade has been studied extensively as it was supported by much of Ireland's newspapers and the Catholic Church. Support for the Spanish government has received little attention.³ Newspaper reports, editorials and government documents reveal a wealth of literature relating to Ireland's own civil war during the Spanish conflict. The Republican ballad-tradition in eulogising the Spanish Civil War will be analysed, in addition to the poetry of Diarmuid Fitzpatrick. This chapter argues that the reporting at the time demonstrated how cognisant of Ireland's history the propaganda was, and that it was not as connected to broad anti-Fascism movements as scholarship thus far suggests. Previous scholarly research argued that

¹ Marcel Acier, *From Spanish Trenches* (The Cresset Press, London, 1937), p. 116.

² *Irish Times*, 19 January 1939.

³ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 109-170. & Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict*, pp. 6-106.

Ireland's connections to the Spanish Civil War were a rerun of the Irish Civil War. This chapter will argue that although this might be true up to a point, the reportage was far more varied and diverse than the historiography suggests.⁴

This chapter will consist of five sections. First, the events at Ballyseedy during the Irish Civil War and how they came to be associated with events in Spain will be examined. Ballyseedy was not only eulogised in the 'Fenian' or the 'heroic old ballads' traditions, but featured in contemporaneous reporting at the time of the Spanish Civil War. Secondly, the belief that Spain was Ireland's 'sister' country will be examined, as well as the idea that Ireland was compelled to act by a historic kinship with Spain to act. Thirdly, the public's 'fears' of Fascism in Ireland will be examined. The fear of communism and Fascism at home manifested itself in the newspaper columns, editorials, journals and personal letters from members of the International Brigades. The fourth section will examine the propaganda employed by pro-Republic publications that sought to discredit Franco's claim of a Christian crusade by continually condemning his use of Muslim soldiers from Northern Africa. The last section will analyse the frequently-cited connections between the partition of Ireland and the unfolding events in Spain. Ulster Loyalists, partition, the Black and Tans and Irish Civil War massacres were all cited to make comparisons with the events in Spain.

Stradling's *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39* touches on the propaganda war in Ireland. McGarry's *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War* discusses the Blueshirt and anti-Fascist factions at length and argues that too

⁴ Bowyer Bell, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *Studia Hibernica* No.9 (1969): pp. 137-63. The idea that events in Spain were a re-run of the Irish Civil War has been questioned in McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War'.

much emphasis is placed on the notion that Ireland's Civil War was being rerun in Spain. Communism in Ireland is the subject of Emmet O'Connor's paper, 'Identity and Self-Representation in Irish Communism', where he argues that the two opposing forces in Spain, Catholicism and Republicanism, impacted heavily on Ireland in the 1930s. It was not until the late 1980s and 1990s, argues O'Connor, that the writings, poetry and ballads of the Spanish Civil War were reanalysed alongside the growth in interest and commemorations for the International Brigades from Ireland. Papers including Daniel Gomes' '*Good-Bye, Twilight: Ireland, Spain, and the Ballad Resurgence*' and Gustav Klaus' 'The Authorship of the Somhairle Macalastair Ballads' will be examined as they argue that political poetry from this period has been undervalued as a historical tool. Despite the depth and breadth of the works produced during the civil war by participants and political observers there has been little research done comparing events in Spain and the Irish Civil War.

Republican propaganda concentrated, initially at least, on Frank Ryan. Ryan fought during the Irish Civil War and was a popular figure among Irish Republicans. Much of the Republican propaganda focused on Eoin O'Duffy, the former head of An Garda Síochána, and the head of the Irish Brigade who travelled to Spain to fight alongside General Franco.⁵ O'Duffy was 'something of a hate figure for republicans' as he was a General in the Free State Army and headed units accused of the massacre of IRA prisoners at Ballyseedy in 1923.⁶ Frank Ryan and his men were battling Fascist forces in Spain to stem the spread of the ideology across Europe. Ryan, both a founding member of

⁵ For more on Ryan, O'Duffy and O'Donnell see Introduction.

⁶ Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy, A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 199.

the Republican Congress and a veteran of the Irish Civil War, became synonymous with the International Brigades and spoke in Gaelic on Radio Madrid to address Irish volunteers for the International Brigades. Peadar O'Donnell, a former IRA and Republican Congress member, argued that the Spanish Civil War 'kindled the antagonisms of our own civil war'.⁷ British imperialism, the treaty, the Black and Tans, and the events at Ballyseedy were important issues for Republicans and ones that would potentially influence volunteers for Ryan and O'Duffy. The events in Spain 'bore resemblances' to the Irish Civil War and took place thirteen years later. In both the conflicts the Church backed the winning side, Republicanism lost and the end of the conflicts saw the imposition of a conservative government.⁸ William Tierney succinctly summarises the difficulty in having anti-Franco material published and distributed in the Free State due to 'the absence of a major publisher, and a poor market among the small reading population either channeled (sic) most literary enterprises towards London or New York or simply stunted them altogether'.⁹ It was not until the 1980s and 90s after Spain's journey to democracy and the re-telling of Ireland's relationship to the Spanish Civil War that the Irish contribution to the Spanish conflict, in both a physical and literary sense, received significant reappraisal and scholarly attention.¹⁰

⁷ Kathleen Devine (ed.), *Modern Irish Writers And The Wars*, (T.J. Internatioanl, 1999), p. 151.

⁸ Shovlin, *The Irish Literary Periodical 1923-1958*, p. 82.

⁹ William Tierney, 'Irish Writers and The Spanish Civil War' *Eire/Ireland*, Vol. 7, (1972), p. 54.

¹⁰ O'Connor 'Identity and Self-Representation in Irish Communism', pp. 36-51.

'Remember Ballyseedy' – Echoes of the Irish Civil War

The attack at Ballyseedy and its subsequent incorporation into Republican mythology 'might be understood as resuming the unfinished project of liberating Ireland'. Bell argued Ireland was 'barren soil' for continental ideologies because the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 had caused political divisions in the new state had become entrenched. Spain was viewed by the far Left and Right in Ireland through 'peculiarly tinted spectacles'.¹¹ Ireland in the 1930s was not 'stale and insular' but continued to 'be a conflictual arena of competing ideologies'.¹² These ideologies expressed competing visions of what Ireland was and what it should strive to be. The events in Spain allowed the ghosts of the Irish Civil War to 'reignite the embittered fissures' and for some the conflict acted as a 'historical reincarnation'.

The Ballyseedy massacre, where Free State forces tied nine prisoners together and tied them to landmine to blow them up, was one of the worst atrocities of the Irish Civil War. Ballyseedy was used by Republicans as an example of Free State brutality. O'Duffy's connections to these events was used for propaganda purposes by the anti-Fascist contingent in Ireland who likened his name to that of Hitler. After raucous scenes at a Christian Front meeting in Drogheda, Patrick Belton, T.D. defended O'Duffy:

One of the interrupters was removed by Gardai amidst uproar, and there were shouts of "Remember Ballyseedy," "Down with O'Duffy," "Hitler," "Fascist," and other remarks...

¹¹ Bowyer, 'Ireland and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', p. 138.

¹² Daniel Gomes, 'Good-Bye, Twilight: Ireland, Spain and the Ballad Resurgence', *Eire-Ireland* 50, no. 3&4 (2015), p. 39.

Belton would not be drawn on the events at Ballyseedy, but reaffirmed his support and pledge to O'Duffy and accused his detractors of forgetting O'Duffy's willingness to die for Ireland:

When he was called upon to do a man's part for this country he did it, and he is doing the same in Spain. Those people who are shouting Ballyseedy at O'Duffy now forget that he was prepared to give his life for Ireland. Were they here when Ireland wanted them?¹³

The massacre was evoked in a poem by Diarmuid Fitzpatrick under the pseudonym, 'Somhairle MacAlastair'. His work was fascinating, drawing in social, political and satirical strands to embarrass O'Duffy and his allies. The poem 'Ballyseedy Befriends Badajoz' took aim at O'Duffy's attempts to form an Irish Brigade. Fitzpatrick's poetry is 'more powerful, more bitter, and more partisan' than any other collections of poems to emerge in Ireland as a result of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁴ His work contains irony and anger towards O'Duffy and Ireland's Catholic hierarchy. He contrasted events in Spain to those that had occurred in Ireland and drew attention to the analogous features of the two massacres.¹⁵ Fitzpatrick used the Spanish Civil War as a reference point to criticise his political enemies in Ireland.¹⁶ The political tone of his poetry was clear:

O'Duffy's dupes are killing as their Fascist masters bid.
Gas bombs are falling on the Mothers of Madrid.
(The birds at Ballyseedy picked flesh from off the stones
And the Spanish suns at Badajoz are bleaching baby bones.)
GOD, they claim, is *FASCIST-THE VOICE* that Pilate
feared
Is spitting streams of hellish hate from a Moorish soldier's beard!
They use the Cross of Calvary to veil their foul designs.

¹³ *Irish Independent*, 1 March 1937.

¹⁴ Tierney, 'Irish Writers and The Spanish Civil War', p. 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁶ Ute Anna Mittermaier, 'Irish Literary Responses to the Spanish Civil War—With Particular Reference to Peadar O'Donnell's *Salud! An Irishman in Spain* (1937)', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 89, no. 7–8 (2012): 123–39, p. 125.

'Vivat Hispania' the voice of Hitler whines.
 Vivat Hispania, but not as they would ask-
 'Defend the Young Republic' cries out the sturdy Basque.
 'Tis the Crescent not the Sickle is looming over Spain,
 But the servants of Mohammed will sate their lust in vain.
 The hirelings hordes of Italy that come with ev'ry tide
 Will conquer proud Iberia when all her sons have died.
 O'Duffy calls his 'godly band' and leads them to the fray.
 (They murdered Liam Mellows upon *Our Lady's Day*.)
 God help you! Spanish 'Connollys' if Lombard-Murphy's
 crew
 Should blood their drunken hellhounds and send them after
 you!
 Our lanes are marked with wayside cross to trace their bloody
 trail,
 While others lie in quicklime pit in ev'ry Irish gaol.
 They can't speak of Salamanca, our Irish Pharisees;
 'Tis the flag of black reaction they flaunt upon the breeze.
 They hope to lure out Irish youth to learn their murder trade
 And bring them back to Ireland as a Fascist shock Brigade.
 They talk of Hearth and Altar as the things that they defend
 (Which means, in Fascist lingo, the sweater's dividend).
 O'Duffy crowned Dictator 'midst the rolling of the drums
 And the fools that listened to him are rotting in the Slums!¹⁷

The Badajoz massacre took place in August 1936 when thousands of peasants were rounded up in a local bull ring and machine-gunned. The peasants had reclaimed land taken by an absentee landlord. The massacre was likened to that of Cromwell's capture of Drogheda.¹⁸ O'Duffy was ridiculed for 'assuming' the role of a 'crusading defender' of Catholics in Spain.¹⁹ The capture of Badajoz was described in an editorial in the *Independent* as 'one of the most important achievements up to this by the Patriot Army in Spain'.²⁰ The event was linked to the massacre in Ballyseedy in March 1923. The reference to Liam Mellows undermines O'Duffy's self-declared role as a

¹⁷ *Irish Democrat*, August 1992.

¹⁸ Séan Cronin, *Frank Ryan The Search for The Republic* (Dublin: Repsol Publishing, 1980), p. 126.

¹⁹ Gomes, 'Good-Bye, Twilight: Ireland, Spain and the Ballad Resurgence', p. 51.

²⁰ *Irish Independent*, 17 August 1936.

Catholic crusader because Mellows was executed on 8 December 1922, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. A lighter poem mocked O'Duffy's crusade to Spain, entitled 'O'Duffy's Ironsides'. Michael O'Riordan, the former secretary of the Irish Communist Party and International Brigader, argued that Fitzpatrick attempted to dispel the image of O'Duffy on his religious crusade to Spain. The seventh verse runs:

Put on my suit of 'Daily Mail',
 A crescent on my back,
 And hoist the 'Independent' flag,
 The Freeman's Castle-Hack;
 My name is tarred in
 Dublin town,
 On pavement and slum wall
 But far away in distant
 Spain
 Grandee and landlord call.
 With Foreign Legion, Riff and Moor
 We'll fight for Al-fon-so,
 And the fame of O'Duffy's
 Ironsides
 Will down the ages go.

On the village pump in Skibbereen
 An eagle screams its woe,
 As it hears the tramp of armed men
 From the bogs of Timahoe,
 The war drums roll in Dublin town
 And from each lusty throat,
 The Fascists sing the ancient hymn,
 'The Peeler and the Goat.'²¹

The poem aimed to discredit the idea that these men were 'heroes' in a holy crusade. The poem took aim at the *Independent*, comparing it to the *Daily Mail* in the United Kingdom. Like the *Independent*, the *Daily Mail* was widely read. Fitzpatrick also aimed his pen at O'Duffy's ally, Patrick Belton. Belton, the founder of the Irish Christian Front who campaigned furiously throughout

²¹ *Irish Democrat*, August 1992.

Ireland on behalf of Franco, lost his Dublin North seat to the Labour Party in 1937:

Oft, in the recent past,
 'Ere Bolshie billows drown me.
 I stood basking in the light
 With all the Mugs around me:
 And in me ears
 I hear the cheers,
 By all my praises spoken.
 Bright hopes that shone
 Are dimmed and gone,
 My heart is nearly broken?
 Thus, I now stand aghast
 With shattered dreams around me.
 Nemesis has come at last
 And in her death-clasp bound me.
 When I remember all
 The Gang flocked together
 Now scattered (with the Bishop's Fund)
 Like leaves in wintry weather.
 I feel like one
 Who treads alone
 Some battlefield deserted.
 By Duce's troops
 And Hitler's dupes
 And Duffy's Moors-Beshirted.
 Thus, blows the wintry blast
 Of parted fame around me.
 Lay me when Death comes at last
 Where the 'Independent' found me.²²

According to Gustav Klaus, the poem served to 'bring home' the message that the Spanish question had an 'inescapable international dimension' and should be of interest to Ireland. The 'Bishop's fund', 'Duce's troops', 'Hitler's dupes' and 'Where the Independent found' illuminate the point that Fitzpatrick was making that the forces aligned with O'Duffy were duped into fighting in Spain. Indeed, when O'Duffy and his men had returned to Ireland, Fitzpatrick took aim in a poem entitled 'Abd El Duffy Abdicates':

There are ships upon the Main,

²² *Irish Democrat*, 4 September 1937.

Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 Bringing Duffy's dupes from Spain,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 For every Lombard Murphy rough,
 And each Ballyseedy tough
 Feels he's had enough,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 First at bloody Badajoz,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 We butchered all the 'Reds'
 Slew the babies in their beds,
 And filled the land with dread,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.

The final stanza questions the legitimacy of the Irish Brigade's actions which were described as being 'gallant' and 'authorised' by the Cardinal:

Bombing women in Madrid.
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 And such gallant deeds we did,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht.
 But you needn't be surprised,
 It was all quite 'authorised'
 So the Cardinal advised,
 Says the Shan Van Vocht

The 'Shan Van Vocht' refers to a rebel song of 1798. The original song urged confidence in the United Irishmen as French aid was on its way. The inference is clear – the 'Shan Van Vocht' was General O'Duffy who professed to lead his men in a Christian crusade in Spain but were duped and were forced to turn tail and return to Ireland. Confidence was high in O'Duffy but in the end, 'Says the Shan Van Vocht', it amounted to little. Fitzpatrick was not finished with O'Duffy and attacked him in a little-known poem entitled 'Battle Song of 'Irish Christian Front': 'Off to Salamanca':

My name is Owen O'Duffy,
 And I'm rather vain and huffy.
 The side of every Bolshie I'm a thorn in.
 But before the break of day,
 I'll be marching right away,
 For I'm off to Salamanca in the morning.

Chorus:

With gold supplied by Vickers,
 I can buy Blue shirt and knickers,
 Let the Barcelona Bolshies take a warning.
 For I lately took the notion,
 To cross the briny ocean
 And I start for Salamanca in the morning.

There's a boy called Paddy Belton,
 With a heart that's soft and meltin',
 Yet the first to face the foemen, danger scorning,
 Tho' his feet are full of bunions,
 Yet he knows his Spanish onions,
 And he's off to Salamanca in the morning.

Now the 'Irish Christian Front',
 Is a Lombard-Murphy stunt.
 (Hark! The ghostly voice of Connolly gives warning)
 And Professor Hogan's pals,
 Can don their fal-de-lals
 And start for Salamanca in the morning.

When they are kicked out of Spain,
 And they travel home again,
 Let them hearken in good time to this, our warning.
 If they try their Fascist game,
 They'll be sorry that they came
 Back from Salamanca in the morning.²³

The poem was originally published in *The Worker* and reprinted in Peadar O'Donnell's *Salud! An Irishman in Spain*. The line 'Lombard-Murphy' referred to the *Irish Independent's* role in fundraising for the Irish Brigade. Professor Hogan, referred to in the third stanza, wrote a book in 1935 entitled *Could Ireland Become Communist? The Facts of the Case* which was said to have influenced O'Duffy. The three stanzas – O'Duffy, Lombard–Murphy and Paddy Belton, represented the 'unholy trinity of evil reactionaries in the hall of infamy of the Irish left', according to Michael O'Riordan.²⁴ The Lombard-Murphy was

²³ Valentine Cunningham, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, (Penguin Books, 1980), p. 387.

²⁴ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil war, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 128.

a reference to the creation and promotion of the Irish Christian Front. Fitzpatrick's work poem suggests that Republicanism both in Ireland and Spain could be 'seamlessly integrated' into the narratives of 'traditional Irish ballads.' Ballads provided the bedrock of cultural and physical republicanism throughout Irish history.²⁵

The Irish Civil War was being re-enacted in Spain and Irishmen had no interest in the future of Spain, according to Michael Tierney writing in *Ireland-Today*. Tierney, a Professor of Greek and a reforming president of University College, Dublin, was part of an influential group of right-wing Catholic academics who was, along with James Hogan and Alfred O'Rahilly, part of the intellectual foundations of the Blueshirt movement.²⁶ Tierney joined the movement in its infancy, the Army Comrades Association before becoming vice president of Fine Gael in 1933. He wrote critically of modern democracy in the Blueshirt publication, *United Ireland*, and was opposed to 'individualist capitalism'.²⁷ Tierney, Hogan and O'Rahilly advocated 'corporatism in study groups, lectures and Catholic periodicals'.²⁸ He was a TD for Mayo North in 1925 for Cumann na nGaedheal. Tierney soon tired of rural politics and did not run in the 1927 election. However, his father-in-law, Eoin MacNeill, founder of the Irish Volunteers, lost his N.U.I seat as a result of changes made by the Boundary Commission. Tierney was called upon to be Patrick McGilligan's running partner and was elected on transfer votes before becoming a senator

²⁵ Gomes, 'Good-Bye, Twilight: Ireland, Spain and the Ballad Resurgence', p. 51.

²⁶ Peter Martin, 'The political career of Michael Tierney, 1920—44', *Irish Historical Studies*, no. 147 (2011): p. 412 & Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 88.

²⁷ Cronin, *The Blueshirts and Irish Politics*, p. 71 & p. 89.

²⁸ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 113.

in 1938.²⁹ The tumultuous time of the 1930s that saw Cumann na nGaedheal lose to Fianna Fáil in 1932 deeply affected the party. It was in this period, which saw the establishment of the Blueshirt organisation, that Tierney joined and then facilitated the merger between Cumann na nGaedheal and the Centre Party. Joining Tierney at the 'intellectual centre' was James Hogan from UCC and as Manning states 'it was almost certainly the first occasion when practising intellectuals were given a formative role in shaping a new and major party, and from the outset the two men saw the party as a vehicle for bringing new ideas into Irish politics'.³⁰ Martin argued that as a proto-Fascist, Tierney's great vision of corporatism lacked the necessary policies to implement his vision and 'oscillated' between accepting and condemning democracy.

Ireland To-Day was a monthly publication consisting of 86 pages. Only 22 issues were published between June 1936 and March 1938. The publication was nationalist but 'less hysterical than its 1920s precursors'.³¹ It was one of the very few publications in the state to doubt Franco's crusade and allow support for the Republican cause to be printed.³² Although the publication was liberal in its outlook, it allowed contributions from scholars of other political persuasions such as Tierney, Hogan and MacNeill. That did not appease the publication's ardent critics, namely the *Irish Monthly* and *Irish Rosary* who accused it of having a Republican bias.³³ Tierney argued in

²⁹ Ibid., p. 416.

³⁰ Maurice Manning, *James Dillon: a biography* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1999) Quoted in Ibid., p. 420

³¹ Clyde Tom, *Irish Literary Magazines: An Outline History and Descriptive Bibliography* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003) p.190

³² Terence Brown, *Ireland A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1985), p. 169.

³³ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 163.

January of 1937 that two opposing sets of Irishmen, the clear majority of whom were on the 'coup d'état side', were aligned 'much the same as in the "Civil War" here of 1922-23'. The danger for Ireland was that the two sets of forces would eventually return and that could result in 'bitter repercussions'.³⁴

'Sister country' – Irish parallels

Scholarly research into parallels between the conflict in Spain and politics in Ireland has tended to draw the simplistic conclusion that the Irish Civil War was being re-enacted in Spain. Although there is some truth in this conclusion the politics of the time were far more complex than a simple case of transporting the belligerents to Spain to fight again. A parallel with Ireland that has received little scholarly attention is that of the civil war in Spain and the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. Much of the Unionist press supported the British government's non-intervention policy throughout the course of the conflict. For the *Londonderry Sentinel* the propaganda of the conflict bore remarkable similarities to that of the civil war in Ireland. The propaganda employed by the *Irish Independent* during the Spanish Civil War was perceived as being equally as vicious and malicious as the propaganda against Ulster Loyalists had been:

While there are, no doubt, some who are not misled by the propaganda emanating from Spain against the Government, much of it of the same false and malicious type of which Ulster Loyalists have too often been the victims, there are others who believe it, but have their wishes stifled by the fact that the Dublin Government, whose attitude in this matter has been strictly correct, has sternly resisted the demands for the severance of diplomatic relations and for active support of those in revolt

³⁴ *Ireland To-Day*, January 1937.

The *Londonderry Sentinel* agreed with Dublin's position on Spain because its policy was in line with the United Kingdom's position. Dublin was resolute in its approach to the Spanish Civil War and abided by the Non-Intervention pact, despite intense calls to aid the insurgents and recognise Franco's regime. The *Sentinel* argued that events in Spain and the coverage of them in the southern press would have been decidedly different if London had been responsible for Ireland's foreign policy. Indeed, the clear majority of Dáil Éireann was Catholic, which meant that objections to government policy over Spain were stifled:

The Republican newspaper's [*Irish Independent*] attitude is undoubtedly the right one, but Ulster Loyalists can easily imagine how different it's [sic] policy would be if the Free State were ruled from Westminster instead of Dublin, and how far more vociferous would be the clamour throughout the South for intervention, regardless of rights or wrongs of such a course from the international point of view. A Roman Catholic Government in Dublin cannot be as roundly abused in the Free State as could a British government at Westminster if all the blame could be laid at the latter's door.³⁵

The propaganda that was being produced for Franco's insurgency by the *Irish Independent* had a familiar feel to the Protestant population. Criticism of the government position in Spain, coupled with assertive Catholicism by sections of the southern media, struck a chord with the *Sentinel*. Northern Ireland was lucky that extreme political ideologies had not taken root:

When the Ulster Loyalists view all these antics of Communists, Fascists and Blueshirts they have reason to be satisfied that none of these alien movements has found congenial soil for growth in the North, where the people prefer to follow their leaders loyally once they have chosen them, and have ever found that that unity has been their strength³⁶

The *Sentinel* supported the British government's position on the Spanish Civil War but reported local perspectives of all affiliations on the conflict.³⁷ One

³⁵ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 1 September 1936.

³⁶ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 October 1936.

³⁷ See chapter 2 on Guernica chapter.

letter, signed by a 'Southern Catholic', used Spain to attack the Catholic hierarchy and Sinn Féin:

Sir-I see it announced that by order of his Lordship the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry, Sunday, 11th October, is to be observed throughout his diocese as a day of special expiation, reparation, against the Church. Would it not also be appropriate to have a special day of atonement throughout the whole of Ireland for the atrocities committed by Sinn Fein from 1916 to 1922, without (unlike the people of Spain) a particle of excuse!

Such a day of reparation and atonement would seem to be long overdue.

"Southern Catholic".³⁸

Similarly, republicans drew their own parallels with Ireland. Fr. Michael Flanagan, a former Sinn Féin president, argued incorrectly that the Foreign Legion and Moors played the same role in Spain as the Black and Tans did in Ireland:

The fight in Spain is a fight between the rich privileged classes against the rank-and-file of the poor oppressed people of Spain. The cause being fought for in Spain was nearer us than we realised. The Foreign Legion and Moorish troops were to Spain what the Black and Tans were to Ireland. The Spaniards didn't send any people to join the Black and Tans here and they didn't make any collections in their churches to help the Black and Tans in Ireland.³⁹

Fr. O'Flanagan was an exception amongst Roman Catholic priests. He actively championed the cause of the Second Republic in Spain. O'Flanagan was conscious of a 'recrudescence of the old alignments' in Ireland and argued that the war was not between Christ and anti-Christ but a fight between the classes. His natural oratory 'made him a valuable proponent of the Spanish republican cause' and he 'put people first'. He was disavowed by the Church in 1936 for his republican views and went to the United States to raise money

³⁸ *Londonderry Sentinel*, 8 October 1936.

³⁹ *Worker*, 12 December 1936.

for Friends of the Spanish Republic. Flanagan could not differentiate between what had happened in Ireland and the conflict in Spain.⁴⁰ He compared Ireland's experience of civil war with that of Spain on his speaking tour of America, when he took the place of Frank Ryan who was returning to Spain.⁴¹ O'Flanagan compared the Spanish Civil War to the American Revolution of 1776 and the Irish rebellion in 1798. General Franco was the butcher of 'women and children of Guernica and Durango' and could be linked 'to the butcher of Drogheda and Wexford, Oliver Cromwell'. O'Flanagan urged the audience to disregard the propaganda from priests because they were the kin of bishops who were 'zealous in urging their people to enlist in British regiments to fight against George Washington's army'. O'Flanagan argued that Pope Leo XIII had backed the British landlords against the 'poor oppressed tenant-farmers of Ireland' and went so far as to compliment Stalin 'who reminds me of our own James Connolly'.⁴²

When the International Brigades were withdrawn from active service in Spain, O'Flanagan addressed the audience gathered to view the unveiling of a banner dedicated to those who had died in the defence for the Spanish Republic. He expressed his scepticism of religion in politics by stating 'if you want to know why Henry II came to Ireland you have the pronouncement of the Pope of that day, very like the pronouncement of the present day regarding Spain'.⁴³

⁴⁰ Denis Carroll, *They Have Fooled you Again: Michael O'Flanagan (1876-1942) Priest, Republican, Social Critic* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1993), p. 216.

⁴¹ O'Flanagan received much hostility from Irish immigrants who called him 'a suspended priest'. Cronin, Séan, *Frank Ryan The Search for The Republic* (Dublin: Repsol Publishing, 1980), p. 104 & p. 264.

⁴² Michael O'Flanagan, *American Catholics and the War in Spain*. Verbatim speech given at Madison Square Garden, New York, 19 July 1938.

⁴³ Carroll, *They Have Fooled you Again*, p. 26.

The formation of the Irish Brigade was supported by some Irish clergy and money was collected at Mass and at Church gates for the 'crusade'. In comparison with Britain, Ireland's dioceses raised a considerable amount of money, with £6008 being raised in Dublin alone with smaller dioceses such as Dromore still managing to raise £697.⁴⁴ O'Duffy's appearance in Spain was not an 'accident'. Writing from Spain, after receiving clippings in the post of Irish newspapers Ryan touched on the power of the press:

Why must the "Post" and other papers talk of this "bloodfeud" between O'Duffy and I? We would be out here, if there never was an O'Duffy. We smashed his attempts to set up his dictatorship in Ireland – and, as *you* know, he came here to find the career that he could not get in Ireland...We came here to fight Fascism; it's just an accident for us that O'Duffy happens to be here fighting for it. And the pity is that the vast majority of those whom he enticed into Franco's camp are just fools who think they are "Fighting for the Faith".

Ryan stressed that it was an 'accident' that he and O'Duffy were in Spain, but he was not averse to using the press to publicise support for the anti-Fascist movement in Ireland. Stradling suggests that the Irish Brigade's intervention in Spain, while 'inexpensive cost in terms of blood-sacrifice', could have turned into a publicity coup for O'Duffy.⁴⁵ If the battle for Madrid had concluded in December 1936, when it looked extremely likely that Madrid was going to fall to Franco, it might have hastened the end of the conflict. Stradling argues that it was no coincidence that O'Duffy's interest in raising an Irish Brigade began in autumn 1936 because the fall of Madrid would have ensured 'a personal political triumph on a world stage'.⁴⁶ An article, assumed to have been written by Frank Ryan, in *Volunteer for Liberty* sought to link the failure of O'Duffy's

⁴⁴ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 162.

⁴⁵ Robert Stradling, *The Irish and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Crusades in Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 109.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

brigade with previous centuries of Republican struggles in Ireland. Ryan claimed the church betrayed their efforts then as now they were betraying O'Duffy and his men:

Possibly by now, O'Duffy's dupes, sadder and wiser men, realise that the Irish Catholic Hierarchy when it induced and financed them to go to Spain to fight for Franco against the people and Catholics of Spain, betrayed them, as it has betrayed the Irish people's struggle so often in the past.⁴⁷

The article sought to discredit O'Duffy's brigade and suggested they were not up to the task of supporting Franco's insurgency. Throughout Irish history the 'real fighters for Ireland never threw up the battle because of the hardships of the trench or the coldness of the cave on the hillside'. O'Duffy had previously cited the legacy of the Flight of the Earls to justify sending his *Bandera* to Spain. They would be based in an area near to where the exiled chieftains of Ulster found sanctuary. Ryan, argued the Wild Geese were an inspiration to Irish Republicans:

The "Wild Geese" left Ireland many years ago and fought with all armies, in all climates against the rapacious army of British Imperialism and won underlying [sic] honour for themselves and for their people. To-day O'Duffy covers himself with ignominy. Men who betrayed the struggle for Irish Independence, and murdered the real fighters for Irish Freedom could never expect to maintain the confidence of the men they had recruited, in a sustained and bloody war. Certainly men who would not fight for their own land would quickly lose their enthusiasm for a cause in which their religion was being used to cloak the most brutal oppression...O'Duffy admits that the men made a unanimous decision to return to Ireland. No greater contrast could be made, than between O'Duffy's dupes and the Irishmen in the British and American Battalions, who have so gloriously upheld the great traditions of the Irish people. Our comrades have once again made a great contribution to the struggle of the oppressed against reaction and tyranny.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 1 (2) June 1937, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Volunteer for Liberty*, 1 (2) June 1937, p. 6.

Ryan's assertions underpin the assumption that although the Irish men involved with the International Brigades were fighting against Fascism in Spain their thoughts were never far from Ireland. In Andalucía, a rumour had spread amongst the men that O'Duffy's brigade were in the opposite trench. The information was inaccurate because O'Duffy's men were not in Andalucía but in Salamanca:

Down in Andalusia, someone spread the story that O'Duffy's men were opposite us. When the order to go over came, you should have seen our lads charge. "Up the Republic!" "To hell with the fascists!" – the old war cries rang out all along the line.⁴⁹

Ivan O'Reilly remembered that his 'ears picked up the brogue in the faint voices of an enemy party' across the valley one night and this could have easily been true. The two sides never met in combat but the propaganda battle waged on.

The parallels between the combatants were not lost on Father Ramon de Laborda. Fr Laborda publicly backed the Spanish government during the conflict and came into conflict with Fr Gannon who supported Franco's crusade. This letter is an example of how events during the Irish Civil War were used to draw parallels and comparisons to the situation in Spain:

In 1922 there was a Civil war in Ireland. One side got arms freely from England and the other side was blockaded. The Irish Bishops were as vehemently on one side as the published pastorals would put the Bishops in Spain. If the forces under President de Valera had got arms from Russia and won the war, does Father Gannon think that the Catholic Church would have been destroyed in Ireland as a consequence? In answering the question Basque Nationalists ask themselves in seeking their freedom in association with Left forces in Spain and outside it.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 116.

⁵⁰ Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 127.

Laborda dismissed Gannon's criticism of the Church and argued that the situation in Ireland was not the same as Spain in terms of arms. However, the published pastorals by the bishops were as vehement in 1922 in Ireland as they were in Spain in 1936. The power of the pastoral as a propaganda tool was as useful in the Irish Civil War as in the Spanish Civil War.

The looming fight in Ireland

Frank Ryan had arrived in Spain in December 1936 and was in Madrid to shore up the city's defences during the battle for Madrid. Even at this early stage, Ryan felt the war against Fascism would reach Ireland. Although they [the Irish] came to Spain to fight 'International Fascism' they had an added 'incentive' because O'Duffy 'had induced a body of Irishmen to help the Fascist Generals of Spain'. His thoughts on the issue were articulated in a letter written from Albacete in January 1937 where he confidently predicted the need for battle-hardened troops in Ireland:

The fight was not only in Spain. Spain was the beginning of a conflict that would soon take place in Ireland.

I have sent one Irish unit to the front on December 28th, and there is another in the making. But you must remember that all our years in the I.R.A. were to good purpose; these lads are well trained and they will never let us down. Those who come home from this scrap will be of good use in Ireland soon.⁵¹

Ryan's thoughts on the matter were clear before he joined the International Brigades. He was convinced that to fight Fascism in Spain was a continuation in the struggle in Ireland. In a letter to the *Irish Press* in August 1936, Ryan

⁵¹ Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 133.

invoked the legacy of the Irish Civil War and expressed concern that forces that were 'driven out' by the Irish people were being invigorated by the Fascist insurgency in Spain:

These aims of the Fascists in Spain explain the movement in their support here. O'Duffy, Cronin, and MacCabe and the other ex-officers who waged war on the Irish people here in 1922-'23, whose forces executed 77 Republicans "officially" and scores of others "unofficially" who jailed Republican priests, now profess to be deeply concerned for the fate of Christianity in Spain. What they are really concerned about is to try to give a lease of life in Ireland to their reactionary forces which, after seizing power by coup d'état in 1922, were driven out by the Irish people in 1932. They have allied themselves not only to British imperialism but to the international forces of Fascism. If the Fascists can recruit a force under the shelter of the Spanish scare, that force will be used against the Trade Union and Republican movement in Ireland.⁵²

Both states had suffered from a 'coup d'état' and now the forces of Fascism were in Spain to gain strength and return to Ireland reinvigorated. Indeed, even after Ryan returned from Spain in March to stand unsuccessfully in the general election that took place in the spring of 1937, his thoughts had crystallised.⁵³ In a letter written in March 1937 Ryan asserted there was no 'if' - the fight would happen:

Every life given in Spain is another reason why Fascism must not pass. If I must take responsibility for Irish casualties there – my conscience is clear, even though parents will not understand it, and even though they will blame me. Our lads who died out there, have not died in vain. They will be an inspiration to us in Ireland when (for I'm afraid there is no "if") our turn comes, and Fascism has to be defeated there.⁵⁴

Ryan talked of not dying in 'vain' in the fight against Fascism. He would have happily died in Spain to save 'thousands' in Ireland. Ryan was acutely aware

⁵² *Irish Press*, 27 August 1936.

⁵³ Séan Cronin, *Frank Ryan The Search for The Republic* (Dublin: Repsol Publishing, 1980), p. 103.

⁵⁴ Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 118. For details of Ryan's thinking during this period see: Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010).

of the sacrifice, comparing the losses in Spain to the huge losses suffered by Irishmen fighting in the British army during the First World War:

Our 50,000 who died in the Great War were sacrificed uselessly; no life given here is given in vain. And look at it from the purely selfish viewpoint. Which is better: that some of us should die at home? For if Fascism triumphs here, Ireland's trial will soon be at hand.⁵⁵

Joe Monks, writing to his uncle in January 1937, a few weeks after his arrival in Spain argued that if the government did not act, the returning 'Column' from Spain would act, regardless of how many and where:

There is one thing I want to tell you, that is if the I.R.A. and Fianna Fáil follow the policy of Pontius Pilate and give Fascism a chance to make a bid for power in Ireland, if even a hundred men raise the flag of the people and if they defend the remotest mountain for a length of time, the Column will rush to their assistance.⁵⁶

If ex-IRA men relished the idea of fighting old foes again in Ireland upon their return, then the Fianna Fáil Government was not enthused by the thought. Seán MacEntee, Minister for Finance, addressed a Fianna Fail convention in Cavan Town where he argued that the new champions of Christianity 'were the same men who tried to sabotage the whole local services in 1934 or 1935' with the sole aim of hurting Fianna Fail. MacEntee was speaking about the prospect of a 'new fascist army' being set up in the twenty-six counties. The fear was that by interfering and fighting against each other in Spain, the violence and war would return with the combatants:

If they permitted that sort of thing to continue, did they think that the Irish Civil War which was being fought in Spain was going to end in the cessation of hostilities in that country when those who fought on one side or the other came back to Ireland remembering brothers' blood spilled...Did they think the issue was going to be ended-was it not clear that when those who thought more of another country than they did of their own and more of another cause than of their own returned to

⁵⁵Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 120.

⁵⁶Acier, *From Spanish*, p. 122.

Ireland there was going to be a recrudescence of the old bitterness which divided them in 1922-'23 – that bitterness which it had been the policy and endeavour of Fianna Fail to obliterate from the minds of the people for ever.⁵⁷

The speech was highly politicised to cater to its intended audience but it did underpin the idea that the security of the state was being threatened by the two warring factions from Ireland in Spain. MacEntee argued that the two sides were more interested in interfering with the affairs of another country than they were with the future of Ireland, as a result of entrenched 'bitterness' from 1922 and 1923. Indeed, after Frank Ryan's capture and imprisonment in Spain, a British official who visited Ryan stated that the Irishman had written for *Mundo Obrero*, a periodical of the Communist Party of Spain, and it was clear that Ryan had more issues with O'Duffy than with his Spanish enemies:

A year ago he had written articles in the "Mundo Obrero" (an organ of left-wing socialism identified with Largo Caballero; Gunning had only read one of these which concerned itself more with O'Duffy than with Spain; he had been wounded at the Jarama and had returned to Spain after convalescence in Ireland.⁵⁸

Although Ryan was in Spain to fight Fascism, O'Duffy was not far from his thoughts. Ryan had written letters from Spain and for Irish publications denouncing Spain's insurgency against an elected government but he could not escape the legacy and experience of the Irish Civil War.

'Heathen Moors' –Discrediting Franco's Christian Credentials

A subject that has received little attention has been the use of Muslim soldiers in the insurgency. The theme was employed by pro-Republican publications to

⁵⁷ *Irish Press*, 22 February 1937.

⁵⁸ Kerney to Walshe, 7/06/1938 DFA 244/8.

discredit the ultra-Catholic image of Franco's insurgency. Franco's Muslim soldiers from Morocco, the Spanish "Army of Africa", totalling between 30-60,000 troops, and were battle-hardened by years of fighting in Africa. They had a fearsome reputation and were urged by their superiors to rape and pillage.⁵⁹ *The Worker* and the *Irish Democrat* sought to delegitimize the idea of a Christian crusade that the pro-Franco publications had helped to create. *The Worker* argued that the people of Ireland were being deceived into thinking the fight in Spain was for Christianity:

THE PEOPLE OF SPAIN - the real people, the workers, peasants and middle classes - continue in their heroic struggle to defend their democratic liberties against the Fascist Black Hundreds.....We are told the Spanish Fascists are fighting for Christianity. And to wage their 'Christian' war they employ the heathen Moors and the scum in the Foreign Legion - the dregs of humanity⁶⁰

The language in the piece, according to Jackson, was as hysterical as that of the right-wing press, who only published 'coarse' propaganda.⁶¹ There was little context to the accusation, and no history of Spanish involvement in North Africa for the reader. The 'heathen Moors' argument was more along the line of:

O'Duffy and his 'Christian' Front are organising a 'Brigade' of Irishmen to fight with Generals Franco and Mola at the head of the Mohammedans against the Spanish government and people. Why? The following 'Christian' programme issued by Generals Franco and Mol, gives the answer. The Generals declare their aims to be:

- The establishment of a military dictatorship.
- The dissolution of parliament and the Trade Unions.
- The suppression of the Left Press (Labour, Republican, Communist, etc.)

⁵⁹ Beevor, *The Battle for Spain*, p. 253.

⁶⁰ *Worker*, 22 August 1936.

⁶¹ Pete Jackson, "A Rather One Sided Fight", *Saothar*, 23, (1998), pp. 79-87.

- Denial of the right to strike for better wages, etc.
- Restoration of landlords estates divided up by previous governments among the small farmers.
- The trial of all Left-Wing leaders.
- A vote for the return of the Monarchy.

This is the 'Christian' programme that the Murphys of the 'Independent' and their tool, O'Duffy, and his henchmen want Irishmen to go crusading for.⁶²

The Worker had a limited readership and was primarily interested in the Irish political situation. In August 1936, *The Worker* was the only pro-Republican publication that could mitigate the consistent and dominant pro-Franco propaganda.⁶³ The paper's role in the early stages of the conflict, when the battle for public opinion might be crucial was to 'refute reactionary propaganda'. A debatable claim by Jackson argued that the *Worker's* 'size and limited circulation, therefore, cannot detract from its importance'.⁶⁴ The *Worker* ceased publication after the Communist Party of Ireland joined with the Republican Congress and the Socialist Party in Northern Ireland to produce the *Irish Democrat*. The *Democrat* consistently published articles that drew attention to Franco's use of Moorish troops. One unlikely instance of this was its ridicule of the Kilkenny Workers' Council decision to grant O'Duffy the freedom of the city:

Recently a section (unfortunately, however, a majority) of the Kilkenny Corporation made themselves appear ridiculous in the eyes of the country by conferring the freedom of the city on General O'Duffy in recognition of his services as a 'defender of Christianity' (in the company of the heathen Moors, of course, was not mentioned.)⁶⁵

⁶² *Worker*, 29 August 1936.

⁶³ See pp. 39-40 for biographical details of *The Worker*.

⁶⁴ Jackson, "A Rather One Sided Fight" *Saothar* p. 87.

⁶⁵ *Irish Democrat*, 9 October 1937.

Like the *Worker*, the *Democrat* consistently drew attention to Muslim soldiers fighting against the Spanish people in the 'Christian' crusade. Extracts from accounts of Irish International Brigadiers who encountered Moors, and book reviews that focused on extracts that condemned the Moors were all examples of how pervasive the propaganda war had become by 1937.⁶⁶ The propaganda against Moors continued into 1937 and was prominent in the *Democrat's* critique of the conflict:

We saw the powerful nations of Europe uniting - possibly for the first time in history - to deny a properly elected Government its right, long established under international law, to purchase arms and other supplies abroad. We saw Franco bringing back the Moors to Europe, to crush his own people. We saw later a regular Italian Army landed in Spain. Yet the Spanish people, whom we were told were against their Government, fought on, almost without arms, against both the military forces that had risen against them and the new foreign invaders... It was now clear to us that the same sinister forces that had stamped the Irish people into the Great War in 1914 were again at work, for as false a cause, with as cynical a propaganda.⁶⁷

The article likened the propaganda during the recruitment drive for Irish soldiers for the British Army with that of in Irish newspapers during the Spanish Civil War. According to the *Worker*, the Irish public were being hood-winked into accepting blatant propaganda by powerful European neighbours.

Father Ramón Laborda – Countering Propaganda

The arrival in Ireland of a Basque priest who supported the Madrid Government was covered extensively by the *Democrat* and the daily titles. The

⁶⁶ *Irish Democrat*, 16 October 1937.

⁶⁷ *Irish Democrat*, 23 October 1937.

Republican Congress and Friends of the Spanish Republic arranged for Father Ramón Laborda to visit Ireland to counter claims by pro-Franco supporters that the Spanish Civil War was a battle between Christianity and communism. Father Laborda addressed meetings across the country, debated with student bodies and corresponded with Irish priests in the readers' letters columns.

His first talk, organised by Fr. O'Flanagan, was on 17 January 1937 at the Gaiety Theatre, with translation by May Keating, a secretary of Hannah Skeffington.⁶⁸ May had married the artist Seán Keating in 1919, been active in Irish Friends of Soviet Russia and was heavily influenced by 'patriarchal structures and regulations', politics and the 'role of women' in society.⁶⁹ She was an active member of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee and helped the fundraise for an All-Ireland Ambulance Corps for republican forces in Spain. Other members of the committee included Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Nora Connolly O'Brien and Dorothy Macardle.⁷⁰ After the war in Spain, May continued her political activities and interest in socialism. She was a supporter of women's rights and advocated the right of single mothers to keep their babies.⁷¹ May became actively involved in the 'Mother and Child Scheme' in the 1950s that culminated in an Act passed by the Fianna Fáil government in 1947 to provide free medical treatment for everyone including mothers and children. The Catholic Church's opposition to the scheme caused it to be was

⁶⁸ Aoife Frances, 'Countering fascist propaganda: Basque priest Ramón Laborda's Irish visit' *Gernika: Then & Now*, April (2017), p. 26.

⁶⁹ Lorna Siggins 'Justin Keating' in Emmet O'Connor and John Cunningham (eds), *Studies in Irish Radical Leadership: Lives on the Left* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 228.

⁷⁰ Eimear O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, (Co.Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2013), p. 93.

⁷¹ Eimear O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, p. 96.

shelved in 1951. May helped coordinate the scheme from her home in Rathfarnham.⁷² She was familiar with Spanish politics from her time in Seville as a child, when she was sent there to recover from rheumatic fever and to complete her education. During her time in Seville she became fluent in Spanish. It was her knowledge of Spanish that allowed her to translate for Father Laborda during his initial visit to Ireland in January 1937. Laborda stayed with the Keating family in their Rathfarnham home during his visit.⁷³

The aim of his visit was to counter fascist propaganda and to spread his message that the Basques were not communists, and that it was due to the work of Basque priests that 'churches and convents are standing today'.⁷⁴ Laborda opened his lecture with the Sign of the Cross and stressed to the audience that he defended 'the attitude of the Catholic Basque patriots' and to give his word that 'we have resisted Communism both on the platform and in the press, not with violence but with argument through public meetings and writing'.⁷⁵

In an exchange of letters after his appearance in the *Irish Press*, Laborda directly drew comparisons with Basque aspirations of independence to those of Irish republicans. He stressed how important the issue of independence was to the Basque people:

But Basque Nationalists readily admit their opposition to the unity of Spain, which is to us as the unity of the British Empire is to Irish Republicans.⁷⁶

⁷² Eimear O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, p. 98.

⁷³ This was revealed in a 2013 interview with May Keating's son, Justin Keating, a Labour Minister in the 1970s in Eimear O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, pp. 93-94.

⁷⁴ *Irish Press*, 18 January 1937

⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 18 January 1937

⁷⁶ *Irish Press*, 25 January 1937

The Irish people had been misled and lied to about the conflict in Spain and had become embroiled in a conflict that invoked 'the sacred name of religion' and has resulted in Irishmen fighting for Franco 'in a war on our small nation'.⁷⁷ On occasion his appearance at rallies led to violence. At an incident at the Ulster Hall in Belfast in the company of Peadar O'Donnell, hecklers shouted, 'What about the nuns?' and 'Up, Franco'. A debate at Queen's University was subsequently cancelled. According to the *Irish Press*, when it was announced that Peadar O'Donnell would be replace Professor R.M. Henry at the debate, the 'feeling among a section of the student body ran high'.⁷⁸ He also displayed a collection of images of wartime Spain at a residence on St. Stephen's Green in the spring of 1937.⁷⁹ It was this collection of images that inspired T.B. Rudmose-Brown, a lecturer at Trinity College to write to the *Irish Press*:

Should not Irishmen, who fought against Britain in the name of their nation, sympathise with the small Basque nation, profoundly Catholic, which is fighting just now for its very existence...The "Nationalists" of General Franco demand the unity of Spain (just as the Unionists of some time back demanded the unity of Great Britain and Ireland) despite the fact that the Basques and the Catalans are not Spanish and have a long history of separate dominion and culture.⁸⁰

Rudmose-Brown argued the exhibition will help to 'convince Irish Catholics' the Basque people are in fact true Catholics and it was 'therefore not impossible' for Catholics to support the government in Madrid.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Irish Press*, 25 January 1937.

⁷⁸ *Irish Press*, 9 March 1937.

⁷⁹ McGarry, *Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 100.

⁸⁰ *Irish Press*, 8 April 1937.

⁸¹ *Irish Press*, 8 April 1937.

The legacy of partition

Partition was repeatedly discussed in public forums in Ireland during the conflict. In his book, *Crusade in Spain*, O'Duffy, when discussing the plight of the Basque people argued that they were no more entitled to independence than Ulster was from the Free State:

It has been said that the Basques are as much entitled to complete independence from Spain as the Irish are to independence from England. But there is no similarity. The Basques are no more entitled to partition from Spain than six counties of Ulster are to partition from Ireland. Their claim is equally absurd.⁸²

Across the island of Ireland there were dissenting views. The Basques themselves could relate to Irish struggles against British Imperialism. Catalonia shared the Basques' desire for independence and autonomy. In O'Riordan's *Connolly Column*, the words of Catalan nationalists reflected the symbiotic relationship between Catalonia and her 'sister country', Ireland. In a letter to Éamon de Valera, the Catalan Youth Party leader stated that Ireland had fought courageously, 'the noble Ireland to which the Catalan nationalists gave with veneration the title of sister country, because her misfortunes were ours and her sufferings were felt in our own flesh'.⁸³

The partition of Ireland did not ensure that Northern Ireland was immune from radicals and communists. Another reader, aware of the power of the newspaper, suggested that Irishmen who advocated the removal of the border, but advocated independence for the Basques and Catalonians, were hypocritical:

It is not easy to understand the mentality of certain Irishmen who are opposed to the partition of Ireland and enthusiastic for the partition of

⁸² Eoin O'Duffy, *Crusade in Spain* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Limited, 1938), p. 195.

⁸³ Michael O'Riordan, *Connolly Column: The Story of the Irishmen Who Fought in the Ranks of the International Brigades in the National-Revolutionary War of the Spanish People, 1936-1939*, (Dublin: New Books, 1979), p. 132.

Spain; opposing the claims of a North-East section in Ireland while supporting the claims of a North-West section in Spain. The claims for total independence made by the Basques and the Catalonians have been to a great extent the result of long years of Liberal and Masonic propaganda.⁸⁴

The writer made an interesting point, in questioning how those opposed to the partition of Ireland could pursue the independence of Catalonia and the Basque region? Partition, loathed by Republicans, was being suggested, arguably incorrectly, to ensure the independence of areas within Spain's national frontiers. In 1937 Rev. Father Henry Gabana was on a lecture tour of Ireland entitled 'The Truth about Spain'. Based in Barcelona, Father Gabana had come to Ireland to refute any 'anti-Catholic bitterness' in the English press. Gabana was conscious of the parallels with Ireland and pointed out that the disintegration of Spain should be anathema to Irish republicans:

Many people in Ireland tried to bolster up the Reds cause by citing the Basque problem. "That problem is not similar to the Irish problem." Said Fr. Gabana. "it is somewhat similar to another Irish problem, the problem of partition in Ireland, and many of those who wanted a united Ireland defended a divided Spain."

Many of the Basques 'were forced to fight' because they were promised 'autonomy' but switched to the Nationalist side after the Reds were routed. Gabana also referred to the Black and Tans and argued they were 'gentlemen' when compared with their Spanish counterparts:

Reference had been made to the Black and Tans in this country, but the Black and Tans were gentlemen compared to the gang of cut-throats called Labour leaders in Spain. England wanted a divided Spain clung together with its pseudo-liberalistic paste, and the English Press knowing what England wanted was doing it. There were only two religions in the world to-day, Catholicism and Communism, and they had to make their choice, and they were not going to get much help

⁸⁴ *Irish Independent*, 7 January 1937.

from certain people in this country. The Government of Spain to the Irish people was Franco, who stood for religion and nationality.⁸⁵

Under the auspices of the Non-Intervention Committee, it was argued, the British had wanted to partition Spain for their own interests. There is no evidence to suggest the Non-Intervention Treaty was designed to partition Spain.⁸⁶ One could suggest arguing otherwise was to draw false inferences as to the intentions of the Irish state in signing the Non-Intervention Treaty:

The non-intervention policy, he said, was designed by people who wanted to see a partitioned Spain. There could be no peace until one side or the other won. Everything the old Christian Spain had stood for had been outraged by the side the Irish Government supported. They were supporting a Government that had wiped God off the land of Spain, or at least off as much of it as it could.⁸⁷

The view was not widely held, but was an indication of the intensity of the debate surrounding partition. It was in readers' letters columns that the question of partition was raised:

As regards the partition of Spain, it is not Spain that is being sought to partition [sic], but the Basques, who are partitioned between France and Spain...The Basque people are eminently Catholic, and are fighting for the purity of their religion, as well as the liberty of their own country. Their desire for Independence has not been because of any propaganda, but a desire as equally sacred as Ireland's desire for Independence, and as that of any nation. Is a separate personality and wish to be free to express it to the good of mankind.⁸⁸

The author decoupled the idea that propaganda had played any role in the promotion of the partition of Spain as independence was 'equally sacred as Ireland's desire for Independence'. For people advocating partition in Ireland,

⁸⁵ *Irish Examiner*, 28 May 1937.

⁸⁶ I can find no evidence for this line of argument. I have corresponded with Professor Paul Preston and Dr Richard Baxell on the matter. Furthermore, Jill Edwards' book *The British government and the Spanish government: 1936-39* has no reference to partition in Spain or Ireland.

⁸⁷ *Irish Independent*, 14 July 1938.

⁸⁸ *Irish Independent*, 9 January 1937.

the border was all that stood between them and the chaos that had engulfed Spain:

The Parliament of the United Kingdom never contemplated the partition of Ireland until it was compelled to do so by the threat of civil war. It only chose the less of two evils. Which would Father Maguire prefer – Ireland as she is to-day or Ireland as Spain is?⁸⁹

The situation in Spain may have been used here because of its current relevance to the Irish public. Indeed, the author Dudley Fletcher, employed Spain as an example in another reply in the *Irish Times*. Discussing the morals of partition and its applicability to Ulster, Mr Fletcher suggested:

We have had two civil wars within a generation, and we do not want a third. Does Mr Pakenham want to see another Spain in Ireland? Then, in God's name, let him leave sleeping dogs lie!⁹⁰

The British government never considered partitioning Ireland until there existed the threat of a civil war:

The Parliament of the United Kingdom never contemplated the partition of Ireland until it was compelled to do so by the threat of civil war. It only chose the less of two evils. Which would Father Maguire prefer – Ireland as she is to-day or Ireland as Spain in?⁹¹

The argument that partition in Ireland had prevented the state sliding into the chaos of Spain fed into the hysteria and scaremongering over Fascism and communism. The thread that connected the two was the fear that without partition Ireland would suffer the same fate as Spain.

Conclusion

Paul Preston wrote that thanks to the work of war correspondents 'millions of people who knew little about Spain came to feel in their hearts that the Spanish

⁸⁹ *Irish Times*, 29 January 1938.

⁹⁰ *Irish Times*, 3 March 1939.

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 29 January 1938.

Republic's struggle for survival was somehow their struggle'.⁹² Except that is, in Ireland. The propaganda in the *Irish Independent*, the best-selling paper in the country, was unmatched in its intensity for Franco's cause. The paper was a rallying cry for Franco's supporters in Ireland and the Catholic Church.

By drawing on five separate strands of propaganda this chapter has sought to shine a light on the more nuanced examples of propaganda during the Spanish Civil War. This propaganda drew similarities between Spain's present crisis, and past Irish conflicts. Although the men fighting for O'Duffy and Ryan in Spain felt they were part of something bigger, the reality was that the propaganda was more focused on issues in Ireland and its past than on fighting for the second Republic or Christianity in Spain.

Parallels have been made with other conflicts such as the American Revolution, the Russian Revolution and many colonial struggles against British Imperialism. However, the Spanish Civil War was different. Spain was relatively close to Ireland and it had men fighting on both sides who had previously engaged in combat during the Irish Civil War. The competing legacies over the Irish Civil War coupled with the feverish atmosphere in Ireland during the 1930s resulted in propaganda being produced both during and after the conflict that sought to dismiss the legitimacy of each side. Furthermore, the idea that Ireland and Spain had a kinship based on history was remarked and expanded upon. Spain, one of Ireland's oldest allies, was in dire need of help.

Franco's use of Muslim soldiers to wage a Christian insurgency was pounced on by the radical press. The issue was publicised at every opportunity

⁹² Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2008), p. 365.

to delegitimise Franco's image during the opening salvos of the conflict when public opinion was being formed. The smaller and more radical publications that did not support Franco had a limited circulation and could not successfully counter the influence of the *Independent*. The partition of Ireland was a powerful rallying call for both Republicans and Loyalists. The implementation of partition in Ireland could be interpreted as either saving the Free State or the newly formed Northern Ireland from the same fate as Spain. Readers argued that without partition Ireland would have become engulfed in as bitter a struggle as Spain. Yet, there was little evidence for such thinking. Nothing was debated in the Dáil to such an effect nor was partition ever discussed as a serious idea by the Non-Intervention Committee. Indeed, even after the conflict had ended in April 1939, Irish officials were still wary of any parallels being drawn between the partition of Ireland and the situation in Spain. Ironically, those calling for the independence of the Basque and Catalonia regions in Spain were the very people calling for the removal of partition in Ireland. Legacy issues in Ireland's history became propaganda tools during the conflict in Spain.

Poetry and ballads have long been a factor in Republican history and the Spanish Civil War was no exception. Rebel songs survived through the centuries to be passed to future generations. This tradition surfaced during and after the Spanish Civil War. Known only by his pseudonym until the 1980s, Diarmuid Fitzpatrick, constantly attacked the character, and legacy of O'Duffy and his men. His poetry is peppered with references to Ireland's past. Ballyseedy was compared with Badajoz. Irish farmers were compared with the Spanish poor. The Catholic church in both Ireland and Spain was ridiculed.

The argument could be made that the popularity of Frank Ryan stood in stark contrast to that of O'Duffy. Outside of the realm of poetry and ballads, events during the Irish Civil War have been consistently compared to the events of the Spanish Civil War, and these comparisons are liberally bestrewn throughout the Irish newspapers' reportage of the conflict. Indeed, the events at Ballyseedy and the perceived parallels between Franco's Moorish troops with the Black and Tans provided the bedrock of propaganda against Franco's insurgency. The Irish experience of Cromwell and of British imperialism provided subject matter for propaganda that was published in columns, opinion pieces and readers' letters.

A constant theme in the propaganda was the fear of Fascism in Ireland. The readers' letters pages articulated a fear that Fascism was poised to take over the state. From the front in Spain, Ryan wrote letters that stated clearly that if Spain was lost in the battle, Ireland would undoubtedly be next. Ryan appeared more preoccupied with O'Duffy than the fight in Spain. For him the prospect of a fascist takeover in Ireland was far-fetched. What this chapter has shown is that propaganda during the Spanish Civil War took many forms. The battle was not only in Spain. It was in the columns and headlines in Irish publications between two combative foes. It was in the meetings that took place across the country. Propaganda served to project one's view of the situation in Spain and delegitimise the other.

Conclusion

By the end of the Spanish Civil War in April 1939 Irish newspaper coverage of the conflict had dwindled significantly. The coverage had acted 'as a touchstone for the divisions within Irish society' with each newspaper reporting the war 'through its own unique editorial ethos.'¹ This thesis confirms Fearghal McGarry's argument that 'little attempt was made to view the civil war in the context of Spanish politics and history; rather, Spain was incorporated into the domestic cultural-political discourse'.² It has expanded McGarry's thesis and demonstrated that the reportage was far more intensive than generally assumed and reflected Irish society and politics rather than solely focusing on events in Spain itself. Why was the press coverage of the Spanish Civil War in Irish newspapers important and how did it shape public opinion?

The significance of Irish newspaper reportage during this period cannot be overlooked. It was the main medium of delivering the news. The fever pitch reportage at the outbreak of the civil war in 1936 allowed each genre of publication, whether nationalist, Unionist, radical or religious to employ comparisons with Irish history in the coverage of Spain. Nationalist newspapers cited Britain's relationship with Ireland to emphasise that Irish people understood and empathised with reports of persecution in Spain. Unionist publications in Northern Ireland compared propaganda about the conflict in Spain to that which had emanated from Dublin during the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War to that faced by the government in Madrid. The news from Spain was actively manipulated throughout the

¹ Mark O'Brien, "In War-Torn Spain": The Politics of Irish Press Coverage of the Spanish Civil War', *Media, War & Conflict* 10, no. 1 (2017): 345 - 358, p. 356.

² McGarry, 'Irish Newspapers and the Spanish Civil War', p. 90.

conflict. The reporting of the battle for Madrid and the attack on Guernica are examples of the mistruths and distortion that were present in Irish newspapers. News from the battle for Madrid in the autumn and winter of 1936 was reported differently in the Irish national newspapers and is a clear example of the manipulation and crafting of a narrative that was powerful propaganda tool. The culpability of the 'Reds' for the attack on Guernica was argued repeatedly by *The Cross*, the *Irish Rosary*, the *Irish Independent* and the *Derry Journal*, despite vast reportage and proof to the contrary. Numerous readers' letters sarcastically welcomed the destruction of the town and welcomed the demise of the 'communist' Basques suggesting that the town's destruction was good for Christian Europe. The thesis demonstrates that readers' letters on the Spanish Civil War are an unused resource in examining the public's reaction to the civil war in Ireland and Spain. The fear over communism was the basis of many articles and editorials throughout the conflict. In hindsight, there was little likelihood that communism would take hold in Ireland. Indeed, outside large urban cities such as Dublin and Belfast, the numbers of committed communists were very low. The rhetoric in the *Irish Independent*, the *Derry Journal* and the *Irish News* was a deception. Christianity, was not, as the papers' claimed at stake in Spain but was being used a rhetorical device by the newspapers and journals to whip public opinion into a frenzy by comparing it to Ireland's colonial history with Britain. Rural areas of Ireland in Donegal, Limerick and Cork all responded to the coverage. National dailies published readers' correspondence that continued for days, in some cases weeks. Newspapers frequently published letters by readers that challenged the papers' editorial stance. This same pattern was witnessed in one of the

most rural counties, Donegal. A debate ensued over the decision to screen the film *Blockade* – that enraged a resident. The cinema owner wrote back to the complainant and defended their position in showing the film. People were clearly exercised throughout the country. The mobilisation of public anger due to the newspaper reportage ensured the public could engage with ideas for O'Duffy's Irish Brigade. Readers learnt about the formation of the Irish Brigade from the newspapers. Likewise, the writings of Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan ensured that an alternative anti-Franco message was also available.

This thesis has examined evidence that suggests a pre-occupation with British colonialism in Ireland, but an alternative perspective is also possible. Many of the editorials that were published in nationalist publications such as the *Irish Independent*, *Derry Journal* and the *Irish News* were anti-British in their argument and message. But anti-British sentiment could have been designed, in part, to act as a proxy for promoting Catholic concerns over secularism and modern influences and the case against the Spanish Republic. In this respect one could argue the propaganda worked. Indeed, the Irish government's policies on Spain did not alter throughout the course of the conflict. Recognition of Franco's regime was only granted in April 1939 and de Valera's policy of neutrality was maintained throughout the conflict, despite the huge pressure by the pro-Franco lobby and the majority of Irish publications that advocated Irish support for Franco. Irish public opinion, in as much as we can tell, was mobilised and enraged by the press reportage. The ICF saw huge numbers at their rallies in Dublin and Cork. Intellectuals spoke against the Spanish Republic and wrote to newspapers and journals. Pro-Franco letters appeared every day in nationalist publications across Ireland, especially in

1936-37. The *Irish Times*, which published letters in support of the Spanish Republic and the occasional letter advocating for Franco, had a more balanced readers' letters page.

British actions in the Boer War and RAF attacks in India were all referenced by nationalist newspapers and employed to underpin accusations of British hypocrisy in its condemnation of Franco in Spain. Nothing reinforces the hypothesis that Irish reportage reflected Irish experiences of colonialism alongside events in the Spanish Civil War more than the Basque evacuations to Britain. At no point in the debates was it proposed that the children would be sent to Ireland. Yet the outcry and anger in some Irish newspapers was a wholly disproportionate response to the evacuations of defenceless Basque children. Relatively few numbers of readers did suggest that Ireland should take in the Catholic children, but these suggestions were drowned out by accusations of proselytism. Cromwell's expulsions from Ireland, the Great Famine and the 1913 Lockout were all cited as reasons why the children should not be evacuated to the United Kingdom. The humanitarian gesture was presented to the readers as a manipulative British action. The implication was that, as the Irish knew from their past, Catholic children were being exported to Britain in order to lure them away from their faith.

Editorials frequently focused on perceived injustices to Germany after World War One rather than on important events in the Spanish conflict. When war with Germany seemed inevitable the tone did alter to one that reluctantly backed Britain in any forthcoming war. There were reports of meetings of local branches of the Ancient Order of Hibernians that supported Franco and leaflets were distributed on trains and at an intriguing meeting in Ballintra.

Indeed, communism featured heavily in the press and debates took place arguing its merits and those of workers' rights. Documents from the Department of Justice warned that Donegal was particularly vulnerable from communism, confirming fears held by priests in the area.

Republican propaganda in Ireland was refracted through Ireland's past experiences with colonialism when reporting on the situation in Spain. The propaganda aimed to de-legitimise Franco's insurgency, using poetry, among other weapons. The poetry focused on Franco's use of Moorish troops, comparing them with the Black and Tans, and drawing parallels between the massacre at Badajoz and the Ballyseedy atrocity in the Irish Civil War. All these themes were highly emotional and aimed to draw a parallel between Irish experiences of colonialism and the occupation being endured under Franco's insurgency. The poetry of Diarmuid Fitzpatrick and his pieces in *The Worker* and the *Irish Democrat* all sought to ridicule Franco's insurgency and mock O'Duffy and the *Daily Mail*.

Such was the intensity of nationalist newspaper propaganda that Unionist publications took note. The *Londonderry Sentinel* on at least two occasions claimed the pro-Franco press in Ireland was producing propaganda that Ulster loyalists had faced in previous decades. The propaganda produced consistently referenced Ireland. Partition was used to politicise the situation in Spain by arguing that those who opposed partition in Ireland were promoting it in Spain. Furthermore, letters from readers in Northern Ireland argued that it was only partition that had saved Northern Ireland from communism.

The aerial bombardment of Guernica further strengthens the case for arguing for the existence of press manipulation during the conflict. This

chapter greatly expanded current research on Guernica by examining the *Cork Examiner*, as well as Donegal, and Northern Ireland newspapers. Donegal newspapers ignored the attack to a large degree and only mentioned the town in passing in an editorial weeks later. In Northern Ireland, the coverage by the Catholic press exposes the deliberate editorial policy not reporting the attack on Guernica. Indeed, the *Irish News*' coverage was criticised by the *New Northman* for its complete lack of objectivity. The attack was misreported by the *Irish Independent* and the *Derry Journal*. Weeks passed in which some members of the national press published misinformation on a daily basis, regarding the bombing of Guernica. The *Irish Times* published correct details over the attack but was arguably drowned out by the misinformation published by the pro-Franco press. Editorials and reports focused on British history in Ireland, India and South Africa. The indiscriminate carpet bombing of Waziristan was cited as being akin to Franco's attack on Guernica. Yet, it was argued, Britain had the audacity to criticise Franco when the RAF were conducting similar operations in India. Interestingly the Unionist press in Derry cited the siege of the city as a direct comparison to the situation in the Basque region. A Unionist paper backed the defence of a Catholic town against a Catholic-inspired insurgency with a headline 'Basques Echo the Derry Watchword'.³ Although the allegations of British hypocrisy were arguably valid, the articles peddled a false narrative that retreating government forces had set fire to Guernica. Subtle sub-editing was employed by the *Independent* that argued 'patriot' aircrafts had bombed Guernica. By using quotation marks around the words 'high explosives' the *Irish Rosary* seemed to imply that the

³ *Derry Standard*, 28 April 1937.

destruction of Guernica was righteous and the use of explosives was effective. The journal, arguably, produced propaganda for Franco's insurgency. The *Irish Democrat* argued that Ireland should close ranks with the Basques. The *Democrat* reported the attack with such vigour one would be mistaken for thinking they had a correspondent on the ground.

In the case of evacuated Basque children, who were offered refuge in the United Kingdom, the research demonstrates that religion was the key motivation of Irish newspapers in criticising British offers of hospitality to them. The same tactics used in the Basque case were first employed during the Lockout of 1913 when the press and clerical leaders criticised the 'Save the kiddies' fund. Then the press accused Larkin of kidnapping the children in much the same way as they had accused the British authorities in 1937. Lurid and exaggerated headlines, both in 1913 and 1937, accompanied articles and opinion pieces lambasting the Dublin and British authorities. Headlines in the *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Independent* were emotional and argued that children were being extradited against their parents' wishes, in order to be converted to proselytism. The articles were grossly caricatured the events they purported to report.

The irony of a Catholic country not offering refuge to Catholic children from Spain was not lost on Gertrude Gaffney of the *Independent*. Readers' letters pointed to the lack of any hospitality being offered to the children in Ireland. Editorials and opinion pieces spoke of the famine in Ireland and suggested Britain's record of exporting Irish children to Barbados by Cromwell demonstrated that the British could not be trusted with children's welfare. Indeed, the forced roundup of Boer mothers and children in South Africa were

sufficient grounds for the *Irish Independent* to criticise the move to help Basque children. Underpinning this chapter was the historical parallel to the Lockout of 1913. The *Irish Times*' about-turn on the issue was intriguing. Originally the paper had been supportive of the children and documented their plight. But as word reached Ireland of bad behaviour by the children their tone altered. The warm praise for the authorities and the children was replaced by a scathing attack on the attitude and behaviour of the children. One can only conclude that this was nothing more than the opinion of the editor, but it does add an intriguing level of analysis to the and historiography of the plight of the Basque children as reported in Irish publications.

The originality of this thesis is strengthened by the readers' letters chapter. This chapter examined readers' letters in the first full month of the conflict, August 1936. These letters revealed not only the clear articulation by readers of Irish newspapers of the issues they perceived to be at stake in Spain and Europe but also how these readers believed that there were close parallels in Irish and Spanish history. However, despite the parallels sectarianism was also present in some of these letters. Partition was cited on numerous occasions as either a key defence against communism or a hindrance to national unity created by the British. Readers warned of the consequences of the fighting men returning from Spain, and argued Ireland could live to regret it just as the British had when soldiers returned to America after learning their trade fighting against the French. A reader criticised the *Irish Times*' stance on the civil war by referencing the Curragh Mutiny of 1914 when the *Irish Times* congratulated the mutineers and suggested they had won the day. In the *Irish Press* the comparison of the situation in Ireland and

Spain continued. One reader questioned whether the role of British news agencies in influencing the Irish public opinion by pedalling the same lies as they had told about Belgium in World War One. The reader wondered if similar lies were emanating from Britain in regard to the deaths of priests and nuns in Spain. The role played by both Catholic and Protestant volunteers in the British army through the centuries was cited as way to defend Spain and Ireland now against Communism in the two countries. The British massacres during the Peninsular wars engaged Peadar O'Donnell and Father Stephen Brown who both argued that far worse had been committed by Britain in 19th century Spain than that which had taken place in Badajoz at the hands of Franco's Moorish soldiers. The Irish Brigade and support for it dominated the *Independent's* readers' correspondence whereas other publications reveal a more varied response. The fact that many readers' compared events in Spain to those of Irish history demonstrates that the Spanish Civil War had many echoes of the colonial past and Britain's role in it for the Irish.

The student population in Ireland, both north and south, was not a fertile breeding ground for activism with regards to the Spanish Civil War. Charles Donnelly had volunteered to fight in the International Brigades and died in Spain. However, despite this, the publications revealed a level of disengagement that resulted in mocking derision of both sides of the conflict and, especially the views of the Irish newspapers themselves. The establishment of Student Vanguard in response to the Blueshirts by Charles Donnelly, Frank Ryan and others demonstrates that their anti-fascist credentials were clear from their student days. The furore that was caused by the publication of Father Laborda's articles in the *National Student* was, it

appears, because of a lecturer's complaint, rather than any mass student boycott. The *Irish Times* published an account of the circumstances of the publications and subsequent outcry was published but the nothing more was published on the matter. This was the most significant occurrence in student engagement with the Spanish conflict. In Belfast, *The Northman* reported on Midgley's defeat in the general election, criticising the role of the press and lambasting the *Irish News* for its coverage of the attack on Guernica. In University College Cork, lecturers took a more prominent role than students in campaigning on behalf of Franco. O'Rahilly and Healy both wrote letters to publications and delivered speeches that supported Franco. No records exist of anything similar happening in Dublin or Belfast. Students were simply not engaged with the war in Spain, and, it might be argued, they were not fooled by the propagandist reportage.

The sixth chapter on Donegal shows a gradual change in reportage over the duration of the war and one that is a significant addition to the historiography of Ireland and the Spanish Civil War. The chapter aims to build on the very limited research on regional Irish newspapers and how they reported the Spanish conflict. The chapter that focuses on the activities of the Blueshirts in the county. They were an active force in the county and held parades in Letterkenny. Donegal was deeply affected by the imposition of the border. Outside of these parameters, the Spanish Civil War made only a slight impression on the county. The focus was on anti-communism, and reports of the conflict were being filtered through the prisms of partition and British colonialism. The reporting at the outset of the Spanish conflict was deeply anti-communist. It also reported local angles to the conflict. Over time editorials

began to focus more on the British response to the conflict, making comparisons and parallels with British colonialism in Ireland. In the *Donegal News*, editorials on the situation in Europe suggested that if a new fascist order was repeated across Europe, a diminished Britain would be the result, therefore, the price for Ireland was worth paying. There was no doubt that all the provincial papers in the Free State favoured a victory for Franco, with the *Donegal Vindicator* on the eve of his victory stating that 'we salute Franco'.

Future Research

The themes in this thesis have highlighted exciting new research avenues. For example this thesis has documented the conflicting newspaper reports and opinion pieces of the battle for Madrid in the autumn and winter of 1936. The *Irish Independent* and the *Irish Times* portrayed events in Madrid as being completely at odds with one another. This portrayal extended to Northern Ireland and Derry, where competing Unionist and nationalist publications published dramatically diverging versions of events that occurred on the same day. The same can be argued for the attack on Guernica, as demonstrated in the case study of Donegal. Regional newspapers, still under-utilised for their Spanish Civil War content, can now be accessed quickly and remotely. This allows for additional research into readers' letters and editorials on the Spanish conflict that further enhances the researching of Irish reportage and the Spanish Civil War. The readers' letters chapter highlighted a neglected area of research. The letters revealed readers' perceptions of the Irish Civil War and the conflict in Spain. Notwithstanding the limitations of using readers' letters as a research tool, despite for example, the lack of knowledge of the

selection process and the decisions made by the editor. The chapter revealed the in-depth level of engagement between Irish men and women from across the island. The student publications chapter revealed a wealth of data from a previously unused resource on the subject by documenting the lack of engagement by Irish students with the events in Spain to the point that such publications routinely mocked the belligerents.

The expanding digitisation of newspapers will continue to aid thematic research into newspaper coverage. Previously, regional newspapers, if available, were only available on microfilm. With the expansion of the British Newspaper Archive and the Irish Newspaper Archive, regional papers, both in the Republic and Northern Ireland, are now becoming increasingly available. One can now search through titles that would have previously been out of reach due to location or time constraints. Rural newspapers are as accessible as national titles. The regionalism of Irish newspaper research is sparse and new scholarship on the topic will be published in 2018, providing a new emphasis on local reportage and its significance.⁴ The expansion of the thematic approach would also be applicable to other theses examining the press coverage of conflicts. There is a dearth of literature devoted to the press coverage in Ireland on conflicts in the 20th century.

Each chapter in this thesis is concerned with a theme. Each theme was chosen for its originality. The themes examined explore original material that further expand the current literature on the press coverage of the Spanish Civil War. Each chapter contains evidence to support the hypothesis that the

⁴ See Ian Kenneally and James T. O'Donnell, eds, *The Irish Regional Press, 1892-2012* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, forthcoming 2018).

reportage, including editorial comment and reader contributions, was as concerned with British foreign policy and historical British actions in Ireland and the Empire as it was with events in Spain.

Although the attack on Guernica and the siege of Madrid have been researched previously, chapters one and two have expanded the number of newspaper titles and sources examined and have provided a fresh perspective on the period in this thesis. Chapters three to seven deal with original themes that have not previously been researched. The use of a thematic structure in this thesis has allowed the insular character of Irish journalism and its preoccupation with events other than the Spanish Civil War to be exposed. Events in Spain were reported alongside articles or comment pieces that were highly critical of Britain's role during the conflict or compared previous Irish experiences with British colonialism to events in Spain. This was not true for all publications, and certainly not for the *Irish Times*, the *Belfast Telegraph* or the *Londonderry Sentinel*. The *Telegraph* and *Sentinel* were Unionist in outlook and the *Irish Times* had been a Unionist orientated publication before independence. The thesis provides a foundation point for future research into Ireland and the Spanish Civil War. Editorial comment, readers' letters and opinion pieces all at some point, referenced aspects of British colonialism in Ireland, including the famine, Cromwellian expulsions and the creation of Northern Ireland with the events in Spain.

In the case of the battle for Madrid, reports of the city's imminent fall to Franco were published next to rival publications proclaiming Madrid's resistance. The battle for Madrid was crucial for both sides in the winter of 1936. Victory for Franco would have significantly shortened the conflict

whereas for the Republic, Madrid was a symbol of defiance against an insurgency that could not be let fall. Both reports could not be correct and exposed how each paper's ideology dominated its reportage. There was a small pool of journalists in Madrid and agency reports were edited and published relying on the journalists to provide copy. Information was scant and what was available, including casualty figures, was manipulated to confirm its own biases. Italy and Germany both supplied troops and equipment for Franco, a fact that was rarely reported neither was the greatly expanded role of the Soviet pilots and officers sent to aid the Republic. Some reports worked to discredit either side, such as the claim that gas bombs were utilised by Franco's forces.

This thesis has greatly expanded the research in how Irish newspapers reported the Spanish Civil War. Newspapers and journals manipulated the news and linked Irish experiences of colonialism with the conflict in Spain by mobilising public support. As Vella describes, newspapers 'document the ways in which reporters and editors thought about their own society and the world around them, how they organized and presented information' and 'enforced or eroded conventional social hierarchies and assumptions'.⁵ In Ireland it was done by drawing on the public's anger over the atrocities and anti-clerical nature of the violence in July and August 1936. The Madrid government represented an all-conquering colonial force to the Irish. Britain, albeit with Protestantism and not atheism, had played that role for hundreds of years of Irish history. Ireland had in the previous decade won her

⁵ Stephen Vella quoted in Dobson, Ziemann, *Reading Primary sources – The Interpretation of texts from Nineteenth and Twentieth Century History*, p. 192.

independence. A war in Spain that threatened Spanish Catholics stirred passions and memories of British colonialism in Ireland. The inconsistencies between the reality on the ground and what appeared in Irish newspapers has been exposed in each chapter of this thesis. Colonialism, British actions in Ireland and a mistrust of Britain's role in world affairs, was consistently reported alongside events in Spain to a conservative Irish public that was reflected in Irish public opinion. This thesis represents an expansion of current literature and adds to the historiography of Ireland's relationship with the Spanish Civil War.

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